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ABSTRACT

A yearly cross-section of current work in Edinburgh University's Department of Applied Linguistics is offered with the aim of eliciting reactions and criticism. Papers in this compilation are: "Discursive Aspects of Metafiction: A Neo-Oral Aura?"; "The Reaction of Learners to Tape-Based Listening Comprehension Materials in French, Spanish and Italian 'Community Classes'"; "Interlanguage Lexis: An Investigation of Verb Choice"; "An Investigation of a Timetabled Self-Access Session in a General English Programme"; "Is It Or Is It Not Interlanguage? A Head-On Confrontation with Non-Native English"; "Conditionals and the Expression of Regret and Relief: Towards a Fragment for a Communicative Grammar"; "Arguments For and Against Free Variation"; "Bibliographic Presentation"; "Crosslinguistic Influence in a Bilingual Classroom: the Example of Maltese and English"; "Assessing the Readability of Medical Journal Articles: An Analysis of Teacher Judgments"; and "Literary Discourse and Irony: Secret Communion and the Pact of Reciprocity." (JL)

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Preface

The first issue of **EWPAL** drew a very encouraging response and we are pleased to have established contact with so many individuals and institutions around the world in our first year. One of the twin aims of the collection is to elicit reactions and criticisms from a wider readership. Contributors' contact addresses are listed at the end of the volume and we hope very much that what we have written will prove irresistibly discussable. Your comments will be valued and acknowledged.

Our other aim is to show a yearly cross-section of current work in Edinburgh's Department of Applied Linguistics (DAL) and Institute for Applied Language Studies (IALS). A glance at the Contents page will reveal the breadth of topics addressed in this issue. As editor I have again opted for a plain sequence of papers without imposing thematic groupings on the eleven papers. (Of course, even "plain" sequences have hidden principles; those I adopted may be clear to the obsessive or the insomniac).

I am indebted to the contributors and also to the people who read and commented on the original submissions: the members of the Editorial Board - Esther Daborn, Martin Gill, Neil Jones, Joan Maclean, Sonia S'hiri and Antonella Sorace - and to Eric Glendinning, Tony Howatt and Hugh Trappes-Lomax.

Particular thanks also go to Elaine Rogerson and John McEwan for converting a pot-pourri of disks and papers into **EWPAL 2**; to Mauricéa Lynch for her assistance with the graphics; and to Ray Harris and his colleagues at the Reprographics Unit of the University of Edinburgh for the printing and binding.

Tony Lynch
IALS

Editor

DISCURSIVE ASPECTS OF METAFICTION: A NEO-ORAL AURA?

Alexandra Georgakopoulou (DAL)

Abstract

This paper attempts to identify certain regularities and tendencies of metafictional discourse. The focus is on the aspects of its metacommunicative component, which refers to the interpersonal relations between the interactants of the narrative. What is interesting is the incorporation of typically oral modes of involvement in the self-conscious texts. The metafictional on-going and cooperative discourse draws on oral interaction devices in order to achieve its immediate and 'involvement-focused' character. In addition to this, it makes them expand into new discursive forms and functions in order to serve its inward reflexivity. Having placed emphasis on how this is done, the discussion will attach the metafictional interaction to the orality/literacy issue: Can this interaction be accounted for in terms of a neo-oral cast or is it a further argument for the treatment of the oral and literate strategies as a continuum instead of clear-cut categories?

1. Introduction

Reflexivity and self-awareness characterize all art forms in the latter half of this century. In literature, the narcissistic turning of art upon its own processes is realized in the realm of the metafictional narrative. Defined as "fiction about fiction, fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its own narrative and/or linguistic identity" (Hutcheon, 1984:1), metafiction lays bare one by one the conventions of fiction-making and transcends them by demonstrating their artificiality. The texture of the metafictional sujet[1] with its intense linguistic and diegetic[2] self-consciousness inevitably affects the interpersonal relations in the communicative circuit of the narrative: Addresser-Text-Addressee.

The following discussion adopts as its starting point the view that metafictional texts radically liberate the reader by assigning her the role of an active participant and co-producer of the fictive universe instead of that of a passive consumer.[3] Building on this, the discussion will attempt to investigate certain highly interactive and audience-oriented devices of the metafictional discourse in relation to the oral modality. More specifically, it will suggest that the metafictional means of promoting the reader's involvement with the text (for the use of the term see Chafe in Tannen, 1982: 35-53)[4] are modelled on face-to-face interaction conventions. In addition to this, emphasis will be placed on how these involvement modes are recodified because of their recontextualization in persistently self-conscious texts.

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3. Direct address in metafiction

The "Dear Reader" invocation, which is exploited as the *par excellence* 'involvement-focused' device in metafiction (the term used by Tannen in Olson, 1985: 130) primarily applies to an on- going face-to-face interaction, for easily identifiable reasons: it presupposes a present recipient who shares the same spatiotemporal context with the addresser and can actively participate in the process of storytelling; it breaks the narrative flow and establishes the 'apostrophic time' (Culler 1981: 149) which coincides with the actual time-level of the storytelling.

Suspending the narration to create the effect of immediacy is inextricably bound with oral situations. Metafiction draws on these features of Direct Address (DA) in order to promote the reader's involvement. The reader is invited into the text- "Come along with me, reader, and don't fear for your weak heart" (Barthelme, 1956) - as a co-producer: "Reader, we have roles to play, thou and I" (Barthelme, 1961). In this case, writing becomes "a different name for conversation" (Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, in Anderson (ed) 1980: 77) which, pragmatically put, could mean that the heavy use of DA in metafiction constitutes a flouting of the unmarked generic norms of written narrative. In such instances, the reader decodes the communicative intentions behind the use of DA by drawing implicatures (for the pragmatics of literary discourse, see Pratt, 1977).

The prevailing element in the linguistic composition of DA is the pronoun "you". The choice is meaningful for both linguistic and semiological reasons. "You" always presupposes an "I" and this is the essence of its relational potential: it signifies a transaction. It is only within a discourse that it assumes significance since it lacks the standardized meaning of other linguistic terms. The fact that it is an empty signifier, whose precise referent is recoverable only from the communica-tive act in which it occurs, facilitates the reader's identification with it. The reader can project herself in the gap opened in the discourse by "you". This is an essential act because it results in the creation of the 'spoken subject' (Silverman, 1983:47), which is the reader's subjectivity as defined by the Audience- image promoted by the text.[3]

The linguistic make-up of DA can comprise, apart from "you", elements such as: intimate vocatives (e.g. "good folks", "my dear friend and companion" in Sterne, op.cit., "dear reader" in Coover, 1971, "Lecteur/interlocutor" in Brophy, 1969 etc.), and phatic elements (e.g. tag questions and other 'involvement markers' such as questions, imperatives, use of "we", "us", "ours", etc. McIntosh, 1963 as quoted in Montgomery, 1988: 192). They all stress the atmosphere of friendship and intimacy with the reader. They also serve the basic aim of apostrophes which is to simulate co-presence with the metafictional addressee (ibid.: 193).

Deixis is another device for the accomplishment of this aim. References to the context of immediate surroundings visible to both writer and reader feign deictic simultaneity (the here and now of the addresser coinciding with that of the addressee). This aims at mitigating the decontextualization (situational autonomy) of metafictional texts, which share the participation framework of all written texts (detachment of the addresser from the addressee:

> Look, I'm writing. No, listen, I'm nothing but talk.
>
> (Barth, 1968: 38)

Here the simulation of co-presence is corroborated by reference to the oral modality as the one of immediate communication: cf. "You who listen give me life in a manner of speaking" (ibid.: 35).

> Look, the index finger on my right hand is missing. Look: through the rip in my cape you can see a vermilion tattoo on my stomach...The system was elementary, as you can see.
>
> (Borges, 1964: 72)

There are cases, however, where metafictionists do not conceal their awareness of their distance from the readers:

> Trust me, not knowing me. I trust you, not knowing you.
>
> (Johnson, 1975: 127)

> If you are not an acquaintance of mine (which you are almost pleased not to be) her name can mean nothing to you.
>
> (ibid.: 83)

> ...besides Sir, as you and I are in a manner perfect strangers to each other, it would not have been proper to have let you into too many circumstances relating to myself all at once.
>
> (Sterne, op.cit: 6)

> Who you are, reader, your age, your status, profession, income, that would be indiscreet to ask.
>
> (Calvino, 1979: 30).

There is another side though from which one can look at the above examples. Omitting any defining characteristics of the encoded reader or 'narratee' (Prince, 1980: 7ff.) is also related to the facilitation of the reader's identification with him/her (see above). This is exactly the case with Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (see last quotation above) which is one of the mot striking metafictional examples of (over-) encoding the reader in order to promote the extratextual reader's engagement in the text.

3.1 Metacommunication

The term 'metacommunication' refers to any element of communication which calls attention to the interpersonal relations that obtain between the addresser and the addressee of a speech event (Babcock in Bauman, 1977: 66).[8] In metafiction it is a particularly powerful component of the narrative. The narrators consistently foreground the text's discursive situation. Their interest in the dynamics of the texts' interactive powers shapes their stance. In principle, they do not efface the signs of their presence by letting the events recount themselves. On the contrary, they consciously contextualize storytelling. They reach out to the audience like oral performers and attempt to establish a strong interpersonal involvement based on dialogue and participatory immediacy. The promotion of an atmosphere of *camaraderie* with the readers is part of this policy. Pleas for communication and sympathy are frequent here:

> As you proceed further with me, the slight acquaintance which is now beginning between us, will grow into familiarity; and that, unless one of us is in fault will terminate in friendship. ... Therefore, my dear friend and companion,...bear with me, and let me go on,...or if I should seem now and then to trifle upon the road...don't fly off, but

> rather courteously give me credit for a little more wisdom than appears upon my outside; and as we jog on, either laugh with me, or at me, or in short, do any thing, only keep your temper.
>
> (Sterne, op.cit.: 6-7)

> Will you share my dual? Come pair with me, and we shall be inseparably paradigmed in the syntax of love.
>
> (Brophy, 1969: 43)

Here, the narrator refers to the dual number to express her unique love relationship with the "interlocutor". Throughout the thoroughly apostrophic *In Transit* the narrator pleads for the reader's sympathy:

> I want, though I may fail to win, your sympathy for me as narrator as well as character...constantly, therefore I have invited you to inspect and (I hope) concur in the machinery of my narration (66)... Pray you, Reader, read on (67)... I fear I shall lose whatever little I have of your affection. ...Yet don't leave me (87).

The end of the novel dramatizes the narcissistic text's need for the love of the readers, because, as Barth puts it, "Narcissus thirsts for love" (1968: 102):

> Love of You has, I mean to say, decided me to live...I desire You to locute to me. (235)

The principle which seems to govern the structuring of the metacommunicative component in self-conscious texts is that "the truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding is to halve the matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn" (Sterne, idem: 77). Therefore, the reader is constantly prodded into action. Numerous micro- and macrolevel devices drag her into the text. She is forced to give harmony and unity to multipolar and fragmentary texts (see Borges's aleatory structures, Robbe-Grillet's textual labyrinths, Brooke-Rose's fragments, Sorrentino's, Sukenick's and Barthelme's - to mention only a few - metafictional collage etc.); or invited to choose between different endings (e.g. Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*) and different structural designs. For example, in Cortazar's *Hopscotch* the reader is free to choose between reading the story in a traditionally linear fashion or skipping from chapter to chapter and going back and forth. In Federman's *Take It Or Leave It* she can read the unnumbered pages in any order she likes, and in Saporta's *Composition I* she may shuffle the pages of the novel exactly as if she were playing with a deck of cards and then read it according to the resulting order.

The negotiated and interactive nature of the metafictional discourse can also be traced in microlevel instances of bringing the reader into the middle, frequently as an evaluator of various components of the narrative:

> Did you find the bubble bit interesting?...or perhaps you were embarrassed? In that case it may have been good for you?...
>
> (Johnson, 1975: 86)

> I could of course have worked it in another way...but surely you would rather have it straight as it happens, as it occurs to me?
>
> (ibid.: 29)

One of the most striking examples of this case is Barthelme's questionnaire at the end of Part One of *Snow White*, where the reader is invited to answer fifteen questions related to the narrative :

e.g. Do you like the story so far?

Yes ( ) No ( )

Is there too much blague in the narration? ( )

Not enough blague? ( )

Notice the manipulation of the page to get the readers to immediately respond as a real audience would do.

Encoding the readers' attitudes or response to the storytelling is another way of bringing them into the narrative situation:

e.g. Sir! The point! To the point!

The point! Where is your point?

You still haven't come to the point.

(Johnson ibid.: 125).

What? Does the fellow know what he is talking about?

Competing with Sterne, indeed! (Johnson ibid.: 118)

The intratextual readers' response naturally is intended to activate the extratextual readers'. This network of devices by which metafictionists shift out of the narrative to refer to the audience as participants of the storytelling event are adjusted from oral modes of narration where the audience provides the storyteller with constant feedback and allows him/her to monitor his/her performance (for challenges to the storyteller called entitlement, or to the storytelling itself in oral contexts, see Shuman 1986: esp. 29-36).

Another identifiable tendency in the conveying of the metafictional metacommunication, or alternatively of metastatements (statements which communicate something about the relationship between addresser and addressee - for a discussion see Bateson 1972), is offending the audience and questioning their tastes.

This policy, again reminiscent of the immediate and negotiatory character of face-to-face interactions, can be interpreted as a last desperate attempt for communication by means of a "lovers' quarrel" (McHale, 1987: 226): "The existence of a relationship, even of an aggressive one, is better than no relationship at all" (loc.cit.). The metafictional 'aggression' towards the reader can vary in terms of how explicit it becomes: there are cases of - more or less mild - sarcasm, for instance:

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> I could astound you with an amount of stunning trivia at this point, if I did not wish to avoid boring myself
>
> (Johnson, 1973: 84)

> ...so how about some sex? That I know you will enjoy: so many commodities testify to the stone certainty of that truth
>
> (loc.cit.)

(Cf. Sukenick's references in both *The Death of the Novel* and in *Up* to the "scenes that sell a novel"). The sarcasm of these examples is directed against audience tastes which have been influenced by the easy aestheticism of mass literature.There are, however, more explicitly aggressive forms of communication with the audience. This is illustrated in the following examples:

> Now that I've got you alone, down here, you bastard, don't you think I'm letting you get away easily, no Sir not your brother
>
> (Gass, 1969: unnumbered)

> Why do you want me to tidy up life, to explain? Do you want me to explain? Do you ask of your bookmaker that he explain?
>
> (Johnson, 1973: 41)

> The Reader! You, dogged, uninsultable, print-oriented bastard, it's you I'm addressing, who else...
>
> (Barth, 1968: 127)

The whole context of Barth's *Life-Story* shows that the preceding aggression is ultimately a desperate plea for communication. The narrator is aware of the readers' vital role:

> Because your own author bless and damn you his life is in y our hands?... Don't you think he knows who gives his creatures their lives and deaths?... And can he die until you have no more of him?... Suicide's impossible: he can't kill himself without your help.
>
> (127-128)

3. Beyond the make-believe of storytelling.

The placement of typically oral involvement techniques in selfconscious texts results in their expansion into new discursive forms and functions under the pressure of the new contextual parameters. Both in classic/realistic texts (the term from Barthes, 1972) and in oral narrative, drawing the reader into the storytelling normally aims at the suspension of her disbelief (establishing the make-believe of fiction). Furthermore, it reinforces the *vraisemblance* (verisimilitude) of the sujet.

However, in metafiction, it is in line with the text's structuralized narcissism. Promoting the readers' involvement is an integral part of the whole self-conscious act of creation. This means that the readers are not permitted to enter the text's imagined cosmos as provisional believers (Nelson in Demetz et al, 1968: 173-91). Instead, they are constantly forced to acknowledge the artifice of what they are reading. Self-conscious and intrusive narrators lay bare all the literary conventions, including the "rhetoric of dissimulation as the process of obliterating the fact that the fictional worlds originate in the author's imagination" (Booth, 1961: 153). They thus draw the readers' attention to the status of the stories as artefacts through their assault upon "the boundary between life and art, reality [and fiction]" (Barth, 1969: 129).

The warning "YOU HAVE FALLEN INTO ART - RETURN TO LIFE" (Gass, 1969: 60) is always lurking in the text and even foregrounded in moments of narratorial confession. For instance, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* the narrator suddenly tells the readers that the "story is all imagination" and that the "characters never existed outside [my] own mind" (cf. the analogous statement in Sorrentino, 1971: "These people aren't real. I'm making them up as I go along", quoted in Hutcheon, 1980: 87).

Similarly, Coover starts his *Magic Poker* by making it clear to the readers that everything is being invented by him as Writer - the setting, the plot, the characters, even the reader: "Just as I have invented you, dear reader, while lying here in the afternoon sun..." (1971: 40). Storyteller, tale and told are so interwoven into fiction that the narrator ends up questioning his own ontological status as well: "But the caretaker's son? To tell the truth, I sometimes wonder if it was not he who invented me..." (ibid.: 27).

In such texts, the reader is treated as a critical co-participant in a communal enterprise of questioning the validity and authenticity of literary conventions. This constitutes the complex paradox on which the metafictional *enonciation* is based: texts which are both "narcissistically self-reflexive and yet focused outward, oriented toward the reader" (Hutcheon, 1980: 7) on one hand promote the reader's involvement but on the other hand appeal to her critical detachment. Being both a co- creator and a critic of the text means that the reader is placed both within and outside it.

The new role of the reader in metafiction is interrelated with the new role of the writer. The concept of the inspired oral performer or the omnipotent realistic Author-Creator who puts all the competing voices under his control and favours a single, centralized meaning is abolished in metafiction. *The Death of the Author* (Barthes, 1974) as the divine lone creator leads to the birth of the reader. Put in other words, creating (writing) and receiving (reading) are projected in metafiction as two aspects of the same effort (Hutcheon, 1980: 145).

4. The Metafictional Interaction and the Orality/Literacy Distinction

Any thorough approach to the metafictional discursive situation inevitably leads to consideration of the orality/literacy distinction. The neo-oral cast (exploitation of techniques typically met in oral contexts) of metafiction is characterized, by Ong, as an instance of secondary orality (Ong, 1982: 175ff).

Secondary orality, a product of the electronic age of literacy, resembles primary or preliterate orality, in that it suggests modes of interaction that are close to the oral ones (idem). However, the two cannot completely coincide, as secondary orality is always dependent upon writing and print. It favours open-system paradigms, that is, interactional (transactional) and process-oriented systems (op.cit.).

Open-system paradigms characterize the art forms of the postmodernist era. Thus the world of metafiction is not a world in isolation. Alongside the new reader of metafiction, we have the new viewer of postmodernist television (see Wyner, 1986 in Appignanesi: 54-58) or the new viewer of postmodernist cinema (e.g. Fellini taking the viewer to the *cinecitta* and placing her in front of the process of film creation, Woody Allen erasing the ontological boundaries between the cinematic world and the real world of the audience in *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, etc.).

Secondary orality is a very helpful notion for contextualizing metafictional discourse. However, when it comes to a stylistic approach to this discourse with reference to orality/literacy, terms which imply a rigid distinction between the two should be avoided. Unlike previous research in the orality/literacy tradition which emphasized the functional, situational and stylistic differences between the oral and the written mode, current discussions of the issue tend to posit an oral/literate continuum to replace the dichotomy. The point usually made is that the stylistic choices typical of each modality can neither form clear-cut categories nor present themselves as isomorphic with orality and literacy *per se*.

Tannen, one of the main representatives of this approach, "suggests that many of the differences between spoken and written language that have been pointed out in previous work result not from spoken vs. written modes themselves but rather from the communicative goals of [the various] discourse types" (Luetkemeyer et al. 1984: 281). She also claims that "strategies that have been associated with orality grow out of emphasis on interpersonal involvement between speaker/writer and audience, and strategies that have been associated with literacy grow out of focus on content" (loc.cit.). Thus the differences observed to date between spoken and written discourse reflect relative focus on involvement. Normally the higher the degree of involvement, the closer it is to the oral end of the continuum of the oral/literate strategies, but not necessarily so (Tannen 1982).

According to Tannen, "written fiction, as opposed to other types of written language, uses strategies that have been associated with oral tradition: that is, it builds upon the immediacy function of spoken language - 'imageability' and 'involvement'" (Tannen, 1980: 214 quoted by Beaman, 1984: 48).

Linking the discussion of this paper to Tannen's framework, we could explain metafictional discourse in terms of "relative focus on involvement" (loc.cit.). If written fiction on the whole shows a high focus on involvement, metafiction in particular can be characterised as the par excellence "involvement-focused" case of fiction.

This approach to discourse types in terms of relative focus on involvement offers an interesting insight into the different genres and their stylistic features. It can also yield interesting implications for the teaching of literature on the whole and specifically of metafiction. The involvement-focused discourse of metafiction, analysed in a classroom context, could serve as a starting point for increasing the students' awareness of the differences among genres as regards their interpersonal function.

Viewing discourse as product or process and as reciprocal or non reciprocal (Cook, 1989:56ff)[7] can form a basis for a typology of different discourse types as a function of their degree of contextualization[8] and of the relation they attempt to establish with the addressee. Provided these distinctions are treated as a cline rather than clear-cut categories, they could also provide the students with guidelines for composing texts. The principle should be that the desirable and/or appropriate focus on involvement for a certain text defines the complex of stylistic devices exploited in it. In other words, the final "recipient design", i.e. "the shaping of a text according to the orientation and sensitivity to its addressee" (Burton in Carter, 1982: 207), heavily depends on its communicative purposes.

The classroom context is not the only domain in which the involvement-focused character of metafiction can serve as a point of departure for discussion and research. Metafictional discourse can also employ the attention of the stylisticians who work in the now fashionable area of Stylistics, that of linking the structure and content of literary texts to their ideological effect.[9] What is of particular interest there is the intratextual functioning of the metafictional discursive modes in relation to their potential extratextual significance. The starting point is to treat the metafictional quest for both the reader's involvement and her critical detachment as an instance of anti- authoritative discourse - in other words, as an attempt to problematize the relation between discourse and power.[10]

The new aestheticism of metafiction can be summarized in the abolition of the scheme Author (Dominant) - Reader (Dominated) (Hutcheon, 1980:161). The author as the sole producing power is seriously questioned, because "there is something arrogant...in the notion of a man setting the universe in order" (Cohen, 1966:95, quoted in Hutcheon, ibid.:157). The ultimate aim of this discursive structuring is to dictate a certain interpretation, that is, to evoke a certain reader response. A sociopolitically oriented stylistic account of metafiction would claim that this is the point where the new type of reader and reading that metafiction encourages can be related to ideological considerations. This means that it would be expected and/or desired that the reader's re-examining and re-evaluating of her relationship to the text and its addressee will lead her to re- examine and re-evaluate her relationship to the cultural codes and systems of the world outside it. The adoption of this view presupposes agreement with the treatment of reading as an inherently political act which involves interpretation, creation and action in both literary and political terms (Hutcheon, 1984: 161).

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Notes

1. 'Sjuzet' or 'sujet' is "one of the terms introduced into the theory of narrative by the Russian Formalists in the 1920s (notably Shklovsky 1925). For any narrative there are two levels: the surface level with the actual sequence of events as narrated (sujet) and the deep level, the abstract chronological or logical ordering possible of events (fabula)" (Wales, 1989: 169).

2. 'Mimetic' and 'diegetic' are rhetorical terms derived from Plato and Aristotle. They refer to two distinct modes of narration: narration which effaces the signs of the addresser and the addressee and narration which foregrounds them and the whole act of 'enonciation', correspondingly. Comparable are the distinctions story/discourse (histoire/discours) and showing/telling; for a discussion of these terms, see Wales 1989. Here the phrase 'diegetic self-consciousness' refers to the metafictional texts' awareness of the act of narration and its conventions.

3. For support of this view, see Butler 1980; Hutcheon 1984, 1988, 1989; McHale 1987; Scholes 1980; Waugh 1984.

4. 'Involvement' here refers to the promotion of the reader's participatory engagement in the text. In Chafe's theory accounting for the differences between spoken and written language, involvement as opposed to detachment is one of the two qualities typically associated with spoken language, (the other one being fragmentation as opposed to integration: see Chafe, 1982). Chafe distinguishes between three kinds of involvement: involvement of the speaker/writer with himself, that is, ego involvement; involvement of the speaker/writer with the hearer/reader, that is, concern for the dynamics of interaction with another person; and involvement of the speaker/writer with the subject matter, that is, an ongoing

personal commitment to what is being talked about (ibid.: 116). The present paper mainly focuses on the second type of involvement and the ways in which it is actualized in metafiction.

5. For a discussion on the function of "you" in discourse analysis, see Montgomery, 1988: 188ff.

6. 'Metacommunication' in Babcock is one dimension of 'metanarration', i.e. the devices that comment on the narrative itself. From the network of these devices metacommunication covers the "social interactional elements of the discourse" (Bauman, 1986:99). More or less explicit references to the storytelling interaction bridge the gap between the narrated event and the storytelling event (ibid.: 100).

7. According to Cook, a reciprocal discourse is one in which "there is ... a potential for interaction,...and the sender can monitor reception and adjust to it" (1989: 60). He also claims that the reciprocal/non-reciprocal type of discourse forms a cline and that it cuts across the distinction between speech and writing. In this cline metafiction would be placed, as the discussion has tried to prove, towards the reciprocal end.

8. The more a discourse is dependent on the contribution of the addressee (e.g. supply of background information) to the process of sense-making, the more contextualized it is considered to be.

9. This tendency of Stylistics goes by various names: Political Criticism, Radical Stylistics, Critical Linguistics, etc.

10. The term 'discourse' is used here in the sense of "the set of relations between two parties engaged in a communicative activity" (Secula, 1982: 184, quoted in Hutcheon, 1988: 186). In this sense discourse is responsible for the creation, transmission and/or reproduction of social values and ideologies.

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THE REACTION OF LEARNERS TO TAPE-BASED LISTENING COMPREHENSION MATERIALS IN FRENCH, SPANISH AND ITALIAN 'COMMUNITY CLASSES'

Brian Parkinson, Giulia Dawson, Lucila Makin, Hélène Mulphin (IALS)

Abstract

This paper describes learner response, as indicated by questionnaires, to a package of tape-based listening materials in French, Spanish and Italian. The learners were in 'community classes' (2 hours per week) at a wide variety of levels. Their response was, in general, cautiously favourable, and indicates the general acceptability of such materials, but also the need for supplementation with study packs for home use. The concept of listening strategies was widely understood by the learners, although the strategies consciously used were of limited range.

1. Introduction

This paper describes some aspects of a research and development project conducted in French, Spanish and Italian 'community classes' at the Institute for Applied Language Studies, University of Edinburgh, from November 1989 to September 1990.[1] A fuller account of the project is contained in the final report, available from the researchers. This paper attempts to highlight some findings of possibly wider interest: it does not aspire to contribute new ideas on the teaching and learning of foreign language listening skills, but to throw some light on the beliefs, understandings, wants and needs of a hopefully fairly representative sample of a large but very poorly researched group of learners and on their receptivity to a modern approach to listening.

In the UK generally, teachers and learners in 'community classes' are a large but shadowy group. Many teachers are unqualified, nearly all are part-time, combining the work with another, more 'serious' job or with family duties. Usually there is no syllabus or other guidance from above, and teachers are free to set their own aims and choose their own material. They have no professional association, and no professional journal. Learners are often assumed, by teachers and even more by outsiders, to be attending as a 'hobby': the existence of vocational needs is vaguely recognised but not systematically pursued. In general, this kind of teaching is the 'poor relation' of EFL/ESL, of modern languages in schools, and of the recent growth area of specialised modern language courses for business and industry.

The IALS community classes are in a more favourable position, in that they are administered by a group of 'permanent' staff, mostly full-time, with a large bank of resources, tried and tested teaching programmes (for some levels), placement procedures, provision for briefing, teacher education, and materials development, and cross-fertilisation with courses in EFL and (to a limited extent) Applied Linguistics, as well as with modern language courses for business and industry.

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Yet other constraints mentioned in the last paragraph still apply, and we (the researchers) feel that the attitudes and experiences of our learners are likely to be fairly similar to those in the better community classes throughout the UK. Groups consist of 6 to 16 learners, at one of 7 levels from Beginners to Advanced, attending for 2 hours per week, for up to 33 weeks per year. The syllabus is general and aims to offer something for all needs, but the emphasis is on spoken language.

Most of the work on this project was carried out by Giulia Dawson, Hélène Mulphin and Lucila Makin, full-time teachers and course directors for Italian, French and Spanish respectively. Each wrote tape-based material in her own language, discussed it with the other researchers, piloted it in classes taught by herself and others taught by colleagues (mostly hourly-paid teachers), and collected and analysed data from these classes. A second Italian teacher, Renata Leishman, co-wrote and helped to pilot the Italian material, but left before the end of the project and was not involved in data analysis.

2. Materials and methodology

A full description of materials and methodology is beyond the scope of this paper, but a brief outline will be given here to facilitate interpretation of learner reactions. This description relates to piloted material, and excludes further units which were written but not piloted.

There were considerable differences between the materials, reflecting the experience and preferences of the individual writers. (The research team had looked at a selection of literature on listening, notably Anderson and Lynch (1988); this was felt to have been useful, but did not produce uniformity of approach.) In French (3 units of material) scripted audio-tape passages were recorded by the writer; topics were adverts, shopping and instructions, and students were asked to list important points or (in two cases) to find discrepancies between the tape and written information. The 5 Italian units, also audio-tapes, were a mixture of 'home made' teacher-recorded material and commercial material (with teacher-designed exercises); these were mostly transactional dialogues (e.g. ordering in a restaurant) and were accompanied by numbered exercises focusing on specific items of information. The 9 Spanish units were mostly video-based, commercial material with teacher-written exercises; the topics were mainly cultural (e.g. street processions) and there was a wide variety of exercises, including some directed at inference (mood, general situation) and gist as well as detailed understanding.

In addition to describing the materials, it is necessary to give some indication of how they were used in class. This is problematic, as the obvious wide variation among the principal researchers was compounded by the use of 6 other teachers, each with her own ideas. Furthermore, no lesson observation was possible, and any description relies on indirect evidence, namely the instructions given to teachers and feedback from teachers and students. The most that can be said is that the 'standard' methodology involved presenting the materials without minute-to-minute teacher interaction, and advising the learners not to worry about individual words but to listen for general meaning. It is likely that in most cases neither of these features was entirely new, but they represented a change of emphasis for most students. This change was perhaps less clear-cut in French than in the other languages, as the questions often emphasised detail.

3. Results (general)

The materials were piloted and data collected from a total of 193 learners in 3 languages and at 6 levels, broken down as follows:

French	60	Beginners	31
Spanish	42	Post-Beginners	51
Italian	91	Elementary	53
		Lower-Intermediate	23
		Higher Intermediate	13
		HIA	20

'HIA' denotes mixed-level Higher Intermediate/Advanced classes. No exact definition of the levels exists, but Elementary students have normally been studying the language for at least 1 year (66 hours), Intermediate at least 2 years.

Data was collected on both cognitive outcomes (student scripts) and beliefs/opinions (questionnaires), but only the latter are discussed in this paper.

The questionnaire was in two parts. It was intended that students should complete both parts on the first occasion that they used project materials, Part Two only on the second or subsequent occasion. This intention was generally followed, except that in French few Part Twos were completed.

The rest of this section lists the items on the questionnaire (1.1 to 1.9 make up Part One, 2.1 to 2.10 Part Two), the percentage of respondents choosing each of the offered alternatives, and an indication of the more frequent write-in responses. (A fuller selection of responses is in the project report.)

Note that in some questions more than one simultaneous choice is allowed, so totals may exceed 100%. Other deviations from 100% reflect unexplained omissions or double responses. In the comments sections, a code such as (x3) means that similar comments or answers were made by three respondents; (xN) by many respondents.

1.1 Do you think your present listening level (ability to understand) in the language which you are now studying is better or worse than your speaking level (ability to express yourself)?

Listening level is much better	39
Listening level is slightly better	30
About the same	12
Speaking level is slightly better	7
Speaking level is much better	3

1.2 How important to you is the improvement of your listening level?

Very important	58
Fairly important	38
Not very important	3
Not important at all	1

Most frequent comments

One must listen before one can respond. (x6)
To understand answer to one's questions. (x4)
I can only learn if I can understand. (x3)

1.3 How often would you like to do listening activities with tapes in class?

Every session	25
Almost every session	34
Once per two or three sessions	31
Once per four or five sessions	7
Very rarely	5
Never	0

1.4 In which area or areas do you normally learn most from such activities?

(tick more than one if you wish)

Vocabulary	47
Grammar	15
Pronunciation	57
Learning how to listen	63
Learning how to communicate	36
Culture	15
Other (please specify)	not counted

1.5 Some people believe that listening work should be done at home and not in class time. Do you:

Agree completely	6
Agree in principle, but not in practice because you would not have time	26
Disagree, because the teacher's help is needed	56
Other (please specify)	not counted

Most frequent comments

Both are necessary. (xN especially Italian)
At home with follow-up in class. (x3)
In class with repeat at home. (x4)

1.6 What, if any, advice has your teacher given you about how to tackle listening activities with tapes?

Most frequent answers

Advice given but forgotten. (xN)
Play tape several times. (xN)
Not necessary to understand every word. (xN especially Spanish)
Pick up words you recognise. (Most students in one Italian class)
Don't worry about what you don't know. (Most students in same Italian class)
None. (xN especially Italian)

1.7 How useful has this advice been?

Answers

Most answered 'very', a few 'fairly', etc. Some students did not answer but there were no completely negative answers, and only 3 semi-negative answers, e.g. 'difficult to follow but very useful'.

1.8 What, if any, particular ways have you developed yourself to tackle such activities?

Most frequent answers

Listening to radio. (xN)
Listening to tapes. (xN)
Develop concentration. (xN French and Italian)
Close eyes. (x3)

1.9 What, if any, other help or advice on listening do you need?

Most frequent answers

Practice. (xN)
I would like to listen and see text at same time. (xN especially French)
How to pick out key words. (x2)
Clearer tapes. (x2)
Loan of tapes. (x2)
Slower speech. (x2)

Note:

Most of the students wrote 'None' or did not write anything. About half the others seem to have misunderstood the question and described what they already did: such replies have not been included above.

Comments on the Listening Activity Just Completed

2.1 How would you describe the level of difficulty of the listening PASSAGE (not the questions)?

Too easy	0
Easy but not too easy	10
Medium	31
Difficult but not too difficult	49
Too difficult	8

2.2 What were the main difficulties?

Most frequent answers

Speed. (xN)
Missing next bit when taking notes. (x3)
Own lack of vocabulary. (xN)
Lack of practice. (x3)
Exact details, trade names. (x3 French)
Tuning in to speed. (x5)
Quality of tape. (xN)
Making out separate words. (x3)
Background noise. (x6 mostly Italian)
Understanding key words. (x5 mostly Spanish)

2.3 How would you describe the level of difficulty of the QUESTIONS?

Too easy	1
Easy but not too easy	19
Medium	48
Difficult but not too difficult	27
Too difficult	3

2.4 What were the main difficulties?

Most frequent answers

Keeping up with tape while writing notes/answers. (xN)
Retaining information (even though I understood). (xN French)
Understanding what was required. (x3)
The word 'senta'. (xN Italian)
How to attract attention. (x4 Italian)

2.5 In what area or areas did you learn the most from the activity?

Vocabulary	38
Grammar	8
Pronunciation	32
Learning how to listen	70
Learning how to communicate	15

2.6 Please mention three or four specific things which you learned.

Answers

Most responses listed specific vocabulary items, and some, especially in Spanish, cultural information, e.g. 'A little about the lives of Lorca and Dali'. Responses of other kinds included:

Pronunciation. (xN)
Concentration. (xN Italian)
Pick out key words/important bits. (xN Italian)

Brand names. (xN French)

2.7 How useful did you find the activity?

Very useful	20
Useful	43
Fairly useful	23
Not very useful	5
Not at all useful	1

2.8 Would it have been better to do this activity at home rather than in class? Please give reasons.

Answers

A large majority, about 85%, said no. Responses included:

No, teacher help needed. (xN)
No, feedback/communication from others needed. (xN)
No, because I would not make time to do it. (x4)
Yes, chance to listen many times. (xN)
We should do both - loan/sell tapes. (xN Italian and French)

(Students were asked to answer Questions 2.9 and 2.10 only if they had already completed the questionnaire on a previous occasion.)

2.9 What, if anything, have you learned (since you first completed the questionnaire) about how to tackle listening activities with tapes?

Most frequent answers

To concentrate. (xN)
To try to get the gist. (xN Italian)

2.10 How, if at all, have your opinions changed on the purpose and usefulness of such activities?

Answers

Most said 'not at all' or similar, often adding 'very useful' or similar. 4 respondents (all Italian) said 'more useful than I thought' or similar.

4. The effects of language, level and 'teacher type' on student response

As the previous section shows, students' 'write-in' responses to certain items were sometimes quite distinctive in a particular language or even a particular class, such differences presumably reflecting specific features of materials or specific advice given. These differences, however, were rather small in relation to the total number of items and responses, and it is perhaps of more interest to look for patterns in the quantitative responses to multiple-choice items. To this end, we prepared tables of percentage responses broken down by language, by level, and by 'teacher type' i.e. whether or not the teacher was a member of the materials writing team. We formulated no explicit hypotheses in advance, though informally we expected that more positive responses and wider strategy use might be expected in more advanced classes, and in those taught by team members. These tables are in the project report, but the main findings will be summarised here.

In general we found that responses were remarkably similar across the sub-groups, with no more variation in most responses than would be expected from purely random effects. The uncontrolled nature of the data precludes the meaningful use of statistical tests, but a few impressionistically 'significant' patterns may be noted. Students of French tended to rate more highly their own speaking ability (relative to listening - 1.1) and to reflect the views of the main French teacher (HM) on the strong link between listening and speaking (1.5); in a general way they seemed less aware of, or concerned about, the development of the listening skill (1.4), but this is contradicted by their positive response to specific exercises (2.5); they also tended to find the questions (not the passages) more difficult (2.3), but not to the extent of being 'too difficult' or 'not useful' (2.7). The small HIA group - 20 students - were somewhat less favourably disposed than others to in-class listening (1.5, 2.7); this may not be mainly a function of level, however, as these two classes - both Italian - were also distinctive in other ways, including high average age (75?), long attendance at IALS and strong social bonds. Predictably perhaps, the lower-level students tended to find passages and activities slightly more difficult (2.3), but only at Beginner level did this seem to affect 'usefulness' ratings (2.7) and it did not cause Beginners to want fewer listening activities (1.3). Predictably also, activities seemed slightly more difficult when presented by a teacher who was not the writer, but not significantly less useful.

5. Conclusions

The questionnaire data, although limited in scope and, as always, affected by various imponderables such as respondents' desire to please, does shed some light on community class learners' general attitudes and on their feelings about listening activities in particular.

First, there is an impression of seriousness: they were not attending classes simply as a hobby, but thought about difficulties which they had experienced or expected in foreign language communication and on ways of overcoming these.

Second, an overwhelming faith in the teacher. Almost all accepted her judgement concerning the right balance of listening and other activities, and regarded her as an authority not only on facts about the target language but also on the best way to listen and to learn.

Third, the learners had clearly not been given, nor had they developed for themselves (at least at a conscious level) any elaborate system of listening strategies. Many had been made aware of, and seem to have accepted, the need to listen for overall meaning and not to be put off by unknown words, but beyond this there was no concrete evidence of strategy development. Similar evidence that conscious strategy use in IALS community classes is limited can be found in Parkinson and Howell-Richardson (1989) and in Parkinson and Nicolson (1988). It is an open question whether this represents a weakness in learning, teaching or materials, or whether such advice would have been unproductive because more complex strategies are inappropriate in community class situations, or because it is better to develop them on an unconscious level by practice.

Fourth, the learners accepted the value of tape-based listening activities. Their response was by no means ecstatic: listening was probably not their favourite activity, and they did not want more than they were getting, but they recognised that such activities are useful and that non-interactive listening is a skill which must be learned. This is an important finding, because at the start of the project some team members feared a negative learner reaction to any 'withdrawal' by the teacher, any change from a methodology where she intervened constantly to explain and supplement taped material. In this respect the learners perhaps showed greater maturity than some of us had given them credit for.

Fifth, learners generally accepted, as we had hoped, that listening to tapes in class, as opposed to at home, is not a waste of class time. In fact they thought of far more reasons than we had thought of for believing that the presence of teacher and fellow learners is useful.

Sixth, many felt that listening at home was useful *in addition* to classwork, and indicated that they would be willing and able to do this. These findings encouraged us to bring forward a plan, already conceived but in abeyance, to develop 'study packs' relating to listening and other skills for use at home in conjunction with our community courses, and later perhaps for distance learning. This will be the focus of our research and development project in 1990-91.

Note

1. This paper was written by Brian Parkinson on the basis of research conducted mainly by the other three authors. On some matters of detail, the text may not reflect the views of all four authors.

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INTERLANGUAGE LEXIS:
AN INVESTIGATION OF VERB CHOICE

David J. Hill (DAL)

Abstract

A study was carried out in Kenya to investigate the oral lexical production of learners of ESL with different L1s. The overall results revealed a clear difference between the Kenya language speakers on the one hand and native speakers on the other: native speakers showed an overwhelming preference for manner verbs of locomotion, while the Kenyans had a slight preference for path verbs. On closer investigation it was found that there were significant differences between speakers of different L1s in the distribution of these motion verb types. This suggests that crosslinguistic influence can operate in quite subtle ways along with other factors.

1. Studies of interlanguage lexis and transfer

Whatever the nature of the interlanguage continuum (cf. Tarone 1983), vocabulary acquisition is a continuous if uneven process within it. As Wilga Rivers (1981) points out, this is one area of language learning which does not seem to be slowed down by increasing age.

> It seems rather to become easier as one matures and one's knowledge of the world and the differentiations in the realm of thoughts broaden. Even in a foreign language, the first ten words are probably the most difficult one will have to learn.
>
> (Rivers 1981:123)

The link between vocabulary development on the one hand and maturation and cognitive development on the other is clearly a vital one, even in a second language. Knowledge of the world enables us to increase our vocabulary stock in almost exponential terms, since once a fragment of the target language has been mapped on to this knowledge it becomes possible to acquire other words indirectly by inferring their meanings from the contexts in which they occur or by being given explicit definitions of them (Johnson-Laird 1987).

In the early stages of learning another language the learner usually seeks to reduce his learning task by finding similarities to his L1 wherever possible (Ringbom 1983). He relies at first on simple translation equivalents and in consequence errors proliferate. As learning progresses, he gradually becomes aware of the dangers of this approach and will stop equating L1 and TL words, sometimes going too far in the other direction, as Kellerman's work (referred to below) shows. Therefore even at an advanced level lexis presents considerable problems for the L2 user (Marton 1977).

A good deal of work has been done on learners' lexical errors, which Meara (1984) has described as the classic research tool in the investigation of lexical interlanguage. Examples of such studies include Duskova (1969), Myint Su (1971), Ringbom (1978, 1982) Laufer-Dvorkin (1986) and Zimmerman (1987). Linnarud's (1986) study of lexis in composition is also partly in this tradition. Meara characterizes most of them as useful descriptive studies which are, however, essentially post-hoc analyses with little predictive or explanatory power. This view reflects a widespread dissatisfaction with 'traditional' error analysis *per se* and a trend towards more balanced investigations of interlanguage in which error analysis could still play a role, albeit reduced. Laufer-Dvorkin's research findings, for instance, provide evidence for a phonological type of organization in the interlanguage lexicon, in which the salient features of lexical items would appear to be grammatical category, stress pattern and initial sounds.

Another well-worn branch of linguistics - contrastive analysis - which had also been applied to lexis (e.g. Dagut 1977), has been reappraised in recent years in terms of transfer (e.g. Ringbom 1983). Heikkinen (1983) has discussed the difference between lexical speech errors in L1 and L2 processing.

Some interesting work on interlanguage polysemy in relation to transfer has been done by Kellerman (1978, 1979). Dutch learners of English were asked if a number of Dutch sentences containing the equivalent of 'break' would translate directly into English and the results suggested that learners tend to transfer 'core meanings' but avoid transferring more peripheral meanings. Kellerman argued that this was because of the universality of the concepts underlying the core meanings.

Levenston and his co-worker Blum have contributed a substantial body of work on lexical simplification strategies, by which is meant how learners cope with situations where they want to avoid certain types of words when they are operating in their L2 (Blum and Levenston 1978a, b).

Meara has investigated the semantic structure of the learner's lexicon (Meara 1978, 1982, 1984) as well as the nature of the phonological entries in it (Meara and Ingle 1986). His work has pointed to major differences between native speakers and learners in the way they store and handle words. The learner's lexicon

> is more loosely organized and the semantic factors are frequently overridden by extraneous phonological factors, such as the chance resemblance between a form in the L1 and another in the L2.
>
> (Meara 1984: 234)

Meara has made extensive use of word association tests in his work. The Kent-Rosanoff list of 100 items, originally designed in the early years of this century to investigate mentally disturbed patients, has been the basis of many psychological studies of verbal behaviour (cf. Postman and Keppel 1970) and has been used in research with bilinguals (e.g. Lambert and Moore 1966). The restricted word association tests developed by Riegel (Riegel 1968, Riegel and Zivian 1972), in which categories such as superordinate, function and quality are used to constrain responses, was employed by Ramsey (1981) in an interlingual study with English, Castilian and Catalan native speakers. Ramsey found that the Castilian and Catalan speakers gave responses which resembled the semantic structure of their L1 more than that of English.

Another line of investigation was taken by Strick (1980), who used word similarity ratings of terms of address for a comparative study of adult semantic structure among native English speakers and Iranian speakers of English. He concluded that semantic development in a second language is a gradual process of transition from native to second language semantic structures.

In another study Ijaz (1986) found that L2 learners consistently favoured lexical/semantic structures that had close equivalents in their native language. Generally, native language conceptual patterns appeared to be a powerful determinant of the meaning ascribed to the L2 and these patterns were rigid and difficult to permeate. Conceptual complexity may thus be a factor influencing L2 lexical acquisition.

The importance of the work of Ijaz and that of d'Anglejan and Tucker (1973), as well as Bates and McWhinney (1981), has been to show that L1 constraints may influence the learner's conceptual patterns and semantic, pragmatic and perceptual strategies without becoming easily apparent in linguistic usage. Therefore lexical errors alone are not a reliable indicator of L1 influence. The strategy of avoidance must also be taken into consideration (Schachter 1974; Palmberg 1983).

Tanaka and Abe (1985) have proposed a model of lexico-semantic development in adult L2 learners, in which the pervasiveness and persistence of transfer is constrained by the conditions of prototypicality and specific exemplariness in order to account for over- and under-extensions.

The influence of the L1 on the acquisition of lexical boundaries in the L2 received confirmatory evidence in an experiment by Graham and Belnap (1986). The role of the L1 in IL lexis has also been studied by Giacobbe and Cammarota (1986).

Palmberg (1987) has carried out a longitudinal pilot study of vocabulary development in a small group of Swedish schoolchildren learning English, without however coming as yet to any very definite conclusions, apart from showing that acquired vocabulary tends to reflect individual interests.

In a study which has some similarity to the present one in its partial focus on verbs of motion, Harley and King (1989) found some evidence that French immersion students in Canada made substantially less use than native speakers of common French verbs expressing both motion and path and preferred "verbs of motion which have direct translation equivalents and which in general can be fitted more readily into semantic and syntactic frames that are common in English" (Harley and King 1989: 426).

Finally, we should not forget that crosslinguistic influence is but one of several factors operating on second language vocabulary acquisition (Schlyter and Viberg 1985). Some other factors are:

- general constraints on information processing
- the communicative importance of target words
- the input frequency of target words
- the formal complexity of target words.

There is clearly scope for a great deal more research in this area.

2. Theoretical considerations

Any investigation of lexis requires the researcher to make certain theoretical linguistic assumptions before he can proceed. Thus a brief consideration of different views of lexical semantics will be necessary.

Classical approaches to lexical semantics tend to view language as an autonomous system. The structuralist tradition led to the development both of Trier's field theory (a holistic view) and of componential analysis (a decompositionalist view). Such conflicting views have been common in the history of semantics, although attempts have been made to reconcile them (e.g. Leech 1981).

Cognitive semantics, on the other hand, does not see language as separate from cognition in general. This approach arose out of psychological studies of categorization, principally those of Eleanor Rosch on prototypes and basic level terms, and has been taken up by linguists such as Lakoff, Fillmore and Langacker. Thus Lakoff's 'experientialist' approach to meaning (Lakoff 1987) traces basic conceptual structures like 'up-down', 'part-whole' and 'motion' back to preconceptual bodily experience. He argues that the bodily experience of motion is based on an image-schema which includes the structural elements 'source', 'path', 'goal' and 'direction' (Lakoff 1987: 275).

Leonard Talmy's work on the semantics and syntax of motion can be viewed within the perspective of cognitive semantics. His study of the Amerindian language Atsugewi led him to a concern with lexicalization patterns, that is, the relation between underlying meaning and surface expression (Talmy 1985). Central to his view of a 'motion event' are the components of 'Figure', 'Ground', 'Path' and 'Motion'. The terms 'Figure' and 'Ground' are borrowed from Gestalt psychology but are given a distinct semantic interpretation. The basic motion event thus consists of one object (the 'Figure') moving or located with respect to another object (the reference-object or 'Ground'); the 'Path' is the course followed or the site occupied by the Figure object with respect to the Ground object; 'Motion' refers to the presence or absence of motion, represented by 'move' or 'be', i.e. 'be located', respectively. A motion event can in addition have a 'Manner' or a 'Cause', which Talmy sees as external to the motion event itself. He argues that his notions of Figure and Ground etc. have several advantages over Fillmore's system of cases, with which there are a number of similarities (cf. Fillmore 1968, 1977).

Talmy presents a typology of lexicalizations of the verb root with respect to Motion. Any language will use only one of three types in its 'most characteristic' expression of motion. Motion conflated with Path appears to be the most widespread type and is favoured by the Romance and Semitic languages, for instance. However, Motion conflated with Manner or Cause is the most characteristic type in at least two major languages - Chinese and English (as well as most other Indo-European languages). The notion of Path in this second type is usually conveyed by particles separate from the verb (as in 'she walked away'); Manner in the first type may be expressed in an adverbial or simply omitted. The third type, Motion conflated with Figure, is not very common but is found in some Amerindian languages. It is possible to illustrate all three types in English: 'enter' - Motion + Path; 'run' - Motion + Manner; 'spit' - Motion + Figure (Talmy 1985:62-72).

Talmy's analysis does seem to provide a kind of universal grammar of motion and has been used as the basis of the study reported on in this paper, which focuses on verb choice. The hypothesis under investigation is that speakers of different L1s will show a significant preference for lexicalization patterns similar to those of their L1.

3. Method

The study formed the major part of a Ph.D. research project largely carried out in Kenya in 1989. Kenya is a multilingual country, with 35-40 language communities, drawn from the Niger-Congo, Nilotic and Cushitic families. As a legacy of British colonialism, English is the medium of instruction in schools from the early primary stage. However Kiswahili (the mother tongue of some small communities along the coast) has the status of 'national language' and is widely used as a lingua franca, as it is over much of East and Central Africa. It is taught throughout primary and secondary school.

The 158 subjects in the study were all students at schools and colleges in the west of Kenya. They consisted of speakers of three languages - Dholuo (DL), Nandi (NA) and Olunyore (YR). Dholuo and Nandi are from distantly related branches of the Nilotic language family; Olunyore is a Bantu language from the Niger-Congo family. Virtually all subjects claimed a knowledge of Kiswahili and some of a third Kenyan language, usually one closely related to their own. They were drawn from two educational levels: (i) first-year pupils at secondary school, who had had eight years of primary education; (ii) trainees at primary teachers college (mostly second-year students in a two-year programmme), who had all completed at least four years of secondary education and in some cases had already worked for a time as untrained teachers. This gave a total of six groups of 20-30 subjects each (labelled DLS, DLT, NAS, NAT, YRS, YRT), drawn from five secondary schools and two teachers colleges.

A small-scale contrastive lexical analysis was carried out to survey the lexical field of locomotion in the three languages and to determine where they fitted in Talmy's typology. Translation tests based partly on Talmy's own examples were administered to a number of speakers; the results suggested that all three languages belonged to the more widespread Path type. In learning English, the students were therefore faced with a language which favoured a different motion verb lexicalization pattern.

The research instrument was a story-retelling task. A simple narrative was constructed around a boy's journey to school so as to include a broad range of locomotion events in a culturally familiar setting (see Appendix). This was accompanied by a series of 24 pictures drawn by a local teacher. Small teams of native speakers of the three Kenyan languages were involved in translating the story from English. Their versions gave further support to the inclusion of these languages in Talmy's Path type. The final three versions and the English original were then recorded on audio tape by native speakers, together with instructions in the appropriate language. In the actual task, after being given a few minutes to study the pictures, the subjects were asked to listen to the story told in their own language as they followed the pictures. They then had to retell the story in English, using the pictures as a guide. After an interval of 7-10 days, but without previous warning, the subjects were given the pictures once more and asked to listen to the story in the original English version before retelling the story again. Both retellings were recorded on tape and later transcribed, either in full or with the verb phrases only.

The experiment was designed to maximize the possibility of transfer from the L1 on the first retelling and then to see how far the effects would persist in the second retelling after hearing the L2 version. To provide a basis of comparison, the English version of the story was administered to two groups of native speakers at primary and secondary school in Scotland.

4. Discussion

Possibly because of the length of the narrative and the similarity of some of the pictures, some subjects had difficulty in retelling the story in the correct sequence and/or reinterpreted the pictures rather than use what they had originally heard. As an example of the latter, picture 14, showing the boy, Juma, scratching his head while he stood at a junction not sure of his way, was, in a few cases, no doubt influenced by his later accident, described as Juma holding his injured head! This kind of reinterpretation, together with omissions and the grouping together of incidents in the narrative in summarized form, makes complete frame-by-frame comparison between subjects impossible. However, the question of frequency of use of motion verb types should not be affected by these problems.

Apart from the usual transcription problems with oral texts a further and potentially more serious problem is the interpretation of the speaker's words, which could affect the categorization of the lexical items. Nevertheless, in most cases this could be clarified from the context.

As indicated above, the main focus of the study was on verbs. A total of 164 verb types was used in referring to the motion events in the narrative. Many of these had only a single token, i.e. they were just used once by a single subject. There was some quite idiosyncratic usage:

> (someone saw a madman and) hesitated back
> he tried to over the ditch (by jumping)

In some cases subjects used more than one verb for a single frame. Although all verbs were listed, along with accompanying prepositions or particles, I will be concerned here with the main verb used.

Table 1 shows the most frequent verbs with their occurrences in each of the Kenyan groups at both retellings.

Table 1 Most frequent verbs used

Verb	DS1	DS2	DT1	DT2	NS1	NS2	NT1	NT2	YS1	YS2	YT1	YT2
climb	18	16	18	7	21	15	25	11	19	13	20	17
come	38	59	33	44	21	34	24	40	29	28	17	29
crawl	6	6	7	11	12	13	11	13	9	18	4	11
cross	5	4	8	7	7	10	19	11	14	12	12	13
escort	25	21	20	23	19	28	37	32	30	26	21	18
fall	23	18	22	19	20	22	22	17	26	29	13	14
follow	27	24	22	14	19	14	21	24	41	38	18	14
go	68	56	62	40	97	97	94	84	112	96	55	35
jump	21	20	23	21	15	20	22	19	21	27	22	15
leave	6	11	7	12	2	12	8	20	3	10	15	12
pass	42	41	27	19	61	38	31	23	39	30	15	16
reach	38	43	38	61	49	59	50	48	76	95	67	67
run	31	24	36	24	37	24	26	19	33	28	12	12
take	15	17	30	25	7	9	16	10	5	15	15	18
walk	54	54	46	56	15	25	21	25	39	50	18	37
ALL VERBS	499	502	506	495	505	604	519	501	595	629	417	428

It can be seen that 'escort' is a high frequency item in all the Kenyan groups, although it did not occur in the English version and was only used by one native speaker. There would appear to be a cultural rather than linguistic reason for this. In East African society, and in other parts of Africa, it is regarded as an essential courtesy to departing visitors to walk with them for at least part of their way home, and the English verb 'escort' is commonly used to refer to this. The custodial sense which the word often has in English (as in 'The policeman escorted him to the cells') is probably less strong for these speakers.

The first step in the analysis was to assign all the verbs used to refer to locomotion to relevant semantic categories. It was eventually decided to have three of these. The first consisted of general motion verbs such as 'move', together with path-specifying motion verbs like 'come', 'cross', 'enter', 'follow', 'leave' and 'reach'. (It should be noted that the most frequently used verb of motion - 'go' - can have either a general motion or a path - usually deictic - sense.) The second category was made up of manner-specifying motion verbs, such as 'climb', 'crawl', 'jump', 'run', 'squeeze' and 'walk'. The third category was a broad range of other verbs used to refer to a motion event. These could be subdivided into various sub-categories such as causal and aspectual, which need not be gone into here. This was quite a large category in terms of verb types, but most were used only once or twice.

The overall distribution of semantic categories for each language group is shown in table 2. The percentage figures are based on the 20 frames in the story where the choice of either a manner or path verb seems to be less constrained by the context (the verbs for these used in the English version are printed in bold in the Appendix); this restriction was abandoned in the subsequent analysis, partly because the selection of the frames was disputable and also to provide adequate amounts of data. These figures can be compared with the distribution for each of the language versions which is given in Table 3. Assuming that the three Kenyan languages all belong to the path-preferring group, the distributions in Table 2 are consistent with the interpretation that subjects maintained in their L2 usage the motion verb-type preference of their L1.

Table 2 Distribution of semantic categories in oral retelling (percent)

	DL	NA	YR	KENYA	MT
'path'	55.23	62.17	57.27	58.23	29.49
'manner'	37.51	30.72	33.32	33.83	57.66
'other'	7.26	7.12	9.42	7.94	13.04

Table 3 Distribution of semantic categories in language texts (percent)

	DL	NA	YR	ENG
'path'	50.00	55.00	45.00	15.00
'manner'	50.00	45.00	40.00	80.00
'other'	0.00	0.00	15.00	5.00

Initially it was hoped that raw verb frequencies for each group could be used in chi-square tests for significant differences. However, the pooling of subject figures in the group totals, while justifiable for demonstrating broad differences as above, violates a fundamental requirement for these tests of having independent observations. It therefore seemed advisable to use Analysis of Variance instead.

This required the formulation of a suitable interval or ratio measure which could be applied to each subject's data. The ratio that seemed most appropriate to the investigation was calculated according to the formula:

$$\frac{P(P + M)}{MT}$$

where P is the number of path (and general motion) verbs used, M is the number of manner verbs and T is the total of all verbs used by the subject to express locomotion. This formula would appear to be preferable to a simple P/M ratio in that it takes account of other verbs used.

The results of a three-way ANOVA (with repeated measures on the Version factor) are shown in Table 4. These should be regarded as provisional, because they are based on equal sized groups (of 20), which involved eliminating a number of subjects who recorded fewer verbs in their retellings.

Table 4 Analysis of variance for PM(T) ratios

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between subjects	223.24	119			
Language	15.50	2	7.75	4.38	0.05
Level	5.47	1	5.47	3.09	n.s.
Language * Level	0.38	2	0.19	0.11	n.s.
Error	201.90	114	1.77		
Within subjects	107.24	119			
Version	2.67	1	2.67	3.05	n.s.
Language * Version	3.13	2	1.56	1.79	n.s.
Level * Version	0.25	1	0.25	0.28	n.s.
Language*Level*Version	1.52	2	0.76	0.87	n.s.
Error	99.67	114	0.87		

This is as far as the analysis has gone at the time of writing but clearly further tests are needed, such as post-hoc Scheffe tests, to find out exactly where the significant language differences are (Language being the only significant main effect to be identified so far).

5. Conclusions

The results of the study indicate a persistent preference for particular verb categories in the field of motion, even after exposure to a TL model and despite the fact that actual verbs used changed in a good many cases between the two retellings. The Kenyan subjects tended to use far more path-specifying motion verbs than did the native speakers. There was a slight overall reduction on the second retelling but this is not statistically significant. This can, however, be seen more clearly on certain frames, where lack of familiarity with some English manner verbs of motion might have been a factor in the use of a manner verb only on the second retelling. It might for instance have been the less familiar (to the Kenyan learner) locomotion sense of a manner verb such as 'squeeze', which led to its infrequency on the first retelling and its far from overwhelming usage on the second.

As for the lack of a clear difference between the two levels, this may reflect the poor level of proficiency of the trainees. It is possible that more advanced learners, such as university undergraduates, would have shown less preference for path verbs and more willingness to use manner verbs.

The significant differences between the three language groups, which the ANOVA points to, are interesting. Clearly Talmy's typology cannot be expected to account for all aspects of lexicalization in the field of motion. Other factors may be involved in the choice of verb. One feature, for instance, that does emerge from the data is the quite common use of nominalization in the Luo-speaking groups, e.g.

have a rest

have a stroll

make a jump

make a corner (i.e. go round the corner)

give (someone) a push (=escort)

In addition the data may provide some evidence of an emerging local variety of English. Certain constructions are to be found throughout all the groups, in particular a tendency to use two verb forms together in describing a single motion event, either as verb + participle or as two finite verbs:

came running

moved passing

passed walking

crawl down climbing

scrambled getting through

(tried to) walk limping

jumped and passed

moved upwards and crawled

left and pushed between

hurried and went away

crawled and went back

There is clearly considerable individual variation in the lexicalization of locomotion as well as the differences due to linguistic and cultural factors and it may not always be possible to disentangle the various strands involved in the performance of language learners. We are therefore still a long way from understanding all the complexities of lexical organization and use in second language acquisition.

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Appendix

(1) Juma left Otieno's home after breakfast (2) and Otieno **walked** up to the main road with him. (3) Juma then **strode off** briskly, whistling happily as he went. (4) When he reached a signboard he **jumped over** the ditch at the side of the road, just as Otieno had told him, (5) and **took** a narrow path into the bush. (6) He soon reached the small market Otieno had mentioned. (7) Juma thought he had plenty of time, so he **strolled round** the shops and chatted to a few people. (8) Then he saw a crowd that had gathered round a local preacher and he **wandered over** to listen for a while. (9) Seeing that it was getting a bit late, he **squeezed past** two fat women (10) and hurried round a corner to get back on his path. (11) But he **staggered back** for a moment as the village madman **ran** past him. (12) When he came to a shallow stream further on, he **waded** across it (13) and **scrambled up** the slope on the other side. (14) He hesitated when he came to a fork in the path but in the end he **followed** the path to the left. (15) However, after some distance he realised his mistake and **ran back** to take the other path. (16) He was feeling rather tired now as he **trudged through** a lot of mud. (17) Unfortunately he slipped off the raised path, fell on a rock and bruised his leg. (18) Eventually he **crawled back** on to the path, managed to stand up (19) and then **limped away** from the unlucky spot. (20) He soon met his classmate John **leaving** his home. (21) John invited him in to have a rest and a cup of tea. (22) Afterwards, feeling much better, Juma **set off** for school with John. (23) As they were now very late, they **sneaked round** the back of the headmaster's house, which was just outside the school compound. (24) Then they **raced** to the school gate and were surprised to see a notice saying that the school would re-open the following week.

AN INVESTIGATION OF A TIMETABLED SELF-ACCESS SESSION IN A GENERAL ENGLISH PROGRAMME

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Abstract

This paper reports an investigation of a timetabled session in a self-access centre within a General English programme. Five classes were observed for three weeks to determine how the available time was actually used. Learners' opinions on the purpose and usefulness of the session were also sought. The most frequently observed activity overall was reading but learner activities varied according to level of class. Although learners' opinions of the timetabled session seem favourable, questions are raised about the resourcing, lay-out and accessibility of the centre and about the issues of learner-training and teacher-training for self-access.

1. Introduction

Over the last fifteen years, numerous self-access centres and self- instructional systems have been established in various institutions, based on the assumption that such centres and systems assist language learning. Reports on these systems, however, have tended to focus on descriptions of functions and procedures rather than on what individual learners do and what they spend their time on eg. the systems described in Dickinson (1987: 43-58) and the report on the student access centre of the Instituto Anglo-Mexicano de Cultura (Maxwell-Hyslop and McAlpin 1982).

Although there are some case studies (Stanchina and Riley 1978) which offer some insights into individual learner behaviour, there appear to be no studies which focus specifically on learner behaviour in, and learner perceptions of, a timetabled session in a self-access centre within the framework of a conventional General English taught course. An exception is a study by St. John at Aston University (1988) in the closely-related field of EAP. Over an academic year, she examined the attitudes of ESP students towards a time-tabled self-access system, and her conclusions were that their perceptions of the value of such a session became less positive as the year progressed and their needs became more specific.

2. Scope and aims of this study

This paper reports an investigation which was undertaken to find out how learners used a timetabled session in a self-access centre (the Study Room: see Figure 1), and their perceptions of the purpose and usefulness of these sessions in language learning.

The learners were attending a General English language course of 11 weeks consisting of 20 hours timetabled tuition per week (see Appendix). This includes one 90-minute session a week in the Study Room with their class teacher, where they can use the materials and facilities and have individual discussion with their teacher. The Study Room is also available for self-access use outside class, with no teacher present, but this was not the area under investigation.

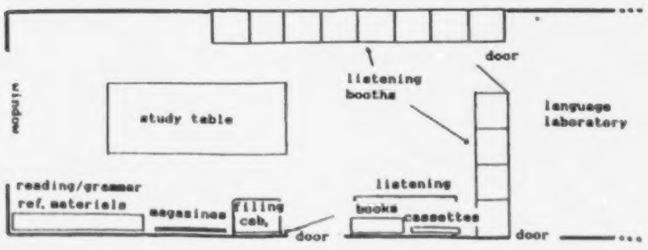


Figure 1: The Study Room

A self-access session has been timetabled into the General English programme for several years. It was assumed that it would assist language learning by giving students the opportunity not only to work on their own, at their own pace, on activities of their own choice but also to have individual access to their teacher. It appeared, however, from informal observation of learner behaviour during the session, and from comments by students and teachers, that some students were not always involved in what teachers would define as 'work' (e.g. sleeping) and that some teachers were uneasy about the management of the session.

We decided, therefore, to investigate what learners do during this timetabled session and whether they perceive it as helpful in their language learning. We also felt it was important in language teaching to evaluate everyday practices and reflect on their value and effectiveness in language learning. We undertook a small-scale study of (i) learner activities in the Study Room session (ii) learner perceptions of its purpose and usefulness in language learning.

3. Research method

Length of study: The investigation took place over a period of three weeks. Five classes were observed three times each.

Subjects: A total of 40 learners were involved, age range 19-35, of various nationalities, from both professional and student backgrounds. This represented the whole student body at the time attending General English either full-time or part-time in combination with Business English. There were five classes of four levels - Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper-Intermediate 1 and 2, and Advanced.

The students were advised of the study from the outset, and as the researchers were regular teachers and known to all the learners, it is believed that learner behaviour and responses were not seriously affected ('the Hawthorne effect'), though this cannot be entirely discounted.

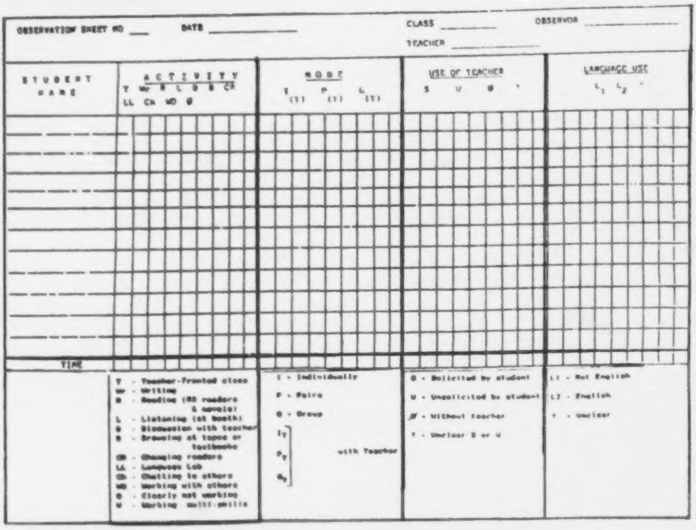
Data collection instruments: It was decided that a range of instruments were required in order to obtain data of both an objective nature (observation sheet, student records of work) and a more subjective nature (interviews and questionnaires). It was also felt advisable to triangulate data collection in order to try to ensure maximum reliability.

a. Observation instrument

The design of the observation system (see Figure 2 below) was decided on after, firstly, informal live and video-recorded observations of learner activities in the Study Room and, secondly, considerations of a practical nature - the management of real-time coding of a whole class (maximum 12 students) within one 90-minute session.

What we observed of learner behaviour suggested the dimensions and categories to include in the instrument. Real-time coding was chosen in preference to recorded observation so that a more comprehensive picture of behaviour in the Study Room session would be obtained; and a fixed-interval coding system of 5-minute time units was adopted so that the predominant observable behaviour of each student in the class could be noted every five minutes. Thus, disregarding the first five minutes, 17 recordings for each student were made during each Study Room session.

We recognised that such a system would lead to only partial recording of events as changes of learner behaviour within the 5-minute time unit would be lost. However, the sequence of events would be preserved and the general pattern of behaviour retained, and areas of doubt or missing information could be clarified or supplied by information on the other data collection instruments.



OBSERVATION SHEET NO ___ DATE ____________ CLASS ________ OBSERVOR ____________

TEACHER ____________

STUDENT NAME

ACTIVITY: T Wr R L D B CR LL Ch WO Ø

MODE: I(T) P(T) G(T)

USE OF TEACHER: S U Ø ?

LANGUAGE USE: L_1 L_2 ?

TIME

T - Teacher-fronted class
Wr - Writing
R - Reading (RR readers & novels)
L - Listening (at booth)
D - Discussion with teacher
B - Browsing at tapes or textbooks
CR - Changing readers
LL - Language Lab
Ch - Chatting to others
WO - Working with others
Ø - Clearly not working
W - Working multi-skills

I - Individually
P - Pairs
G - Group
I_T, P_T, G_T with Teacher

S - Solicited by student
U - Unsolicited by student
Ø - Without teacher
? - Unclear S or U

L1 - Not English
L2 - English
? - Unclear

Figure 2: Observation Instrument - a fixed-interval category system

Note: The multi-skills category /W/ represents activity where the learner is using a variety of texts such as dictionary, grammar book, reference book and is also reading and writing. The Language Laboratory is en suite with the Study Room.

We recognised that the categories of the Activity dimension were of a mixed nature, i.e. specific skill areas (Wr, L, R), location (LL) and modes (T-fronted, discussion with T), but it was decided to retain these as they reflected what actually went on in the Study Room. We also recognised that some categories were low-inference items, while others were high-inference, requiring some interpretation and judgement from the coder, but we considered that close examination of students' work would be too intrusive. We believe that the information recorded here, when combined with data in the other dimensions, provides a fairly clear picture of the Study Room at any one time.

b. Narrative description

Although the focus of the investigation was on learner activity in the Study Room, the role of the teacher could not be discounted because of her possible effect on student behaviour in this session. Consequently, a second, subjective observation sheet was kept by another observer - a narrative account which focused mainly on the behaviour of the teacher but also, obviously, included a description of some learners. The account was a 'running commentary' and therefore not divided into fixed time units.

c. Record of work

A Record of Work for learners to fill in after each Study Room session was designed in order to (a) have access to the students' perceptions of what they were in fact doing and (b) be able to see where the observer's and the students' recordings of that work differed.

The Record of Work required the learner's recording of three areas; (a) the activities engaged in, (b) the materials used and (c) the time spent on each activity and the mode of working.

The final version was the result of several trials in which accessibility for all levels of learners and acceptability (i.e. that they would not refuse to fill it in) were the main priorities. The categories of work, therefore, are fewer in number and less complex than those on the Observation instrument and the time spent on activities was recorded using the categories *All/Most/Some (of total time)*.

d. Interview

A semi-structured interview format was designed, the open-ended questions reflecting the overall objective of exploring students' perceptions of the purpose and usefulness of the Study Room session. It also included questions on out-of-class use of the Study Room and suggestions for improvement (see Appendix).

Two students - different ones after each session - were asked to stay behind at the end of the Study Room sessions to be interviewed by the observer and another teacher. Not all the students in the study were interviewed, however, due to absences and early departures from the course.

e. Post- observation data collection

All members of the General English staff were asked to fill in an open-ended questionnaire giving their perceptions of the purpose of the Study Room session, their management of it, and their suggestions for improvement (see Appendix).

4. Discussion of Results

4.1 Range of activities in the Study Room

The learners took part in a wide range of activities. The diagrams below (Figures 3 and 4) highlight the activities on which the most time was spent across all classes over the three week period.

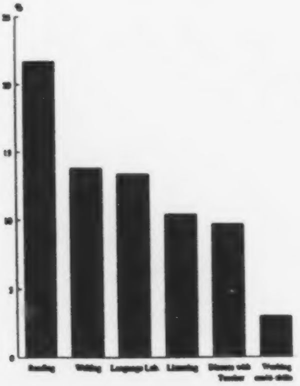


Figure 3: Proportion of time spent on major activities across all classes. Data based on Observation Instrument.

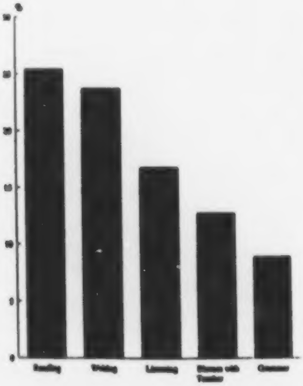


Figure 4: Proportion of time spent on major activities across all classes. Data based on Records of Work.

Reading

Reading was the most frequent activity for all levels but very little time was spent reading graded readers or novels, of which there is a small collection available. From the student Records of Work, it appears that the 'reading time' consisted of reading newspaper articles, reference books (including grammar books), textbooks, and students' own essays.

This lack of extensive reading may be accounted for by the fact that graded readers and novels are the only material in the Study Room which can be borrowed for home use, and the loan forms for readers indicate that a certain number of books are regularly borrowed, particularly by lower-level learners. But it may also reflect a lack of emphasis put on extensive reading during the timetabled session by teachers. As reading of this kind can be done at home, teachers may feel that learners could more usefully spend their time in the session on other activities, including individual discussions with teachers.

We can speculate that 'study reading' is common across all classes, although slightly less so at Pre-Intermediate level, because it provides a change of pace from group activity-based classwork, the opportunity for students to tackle a text on their own at their own pace and a chance to obtain information from reference books for project work.

Listening

There is a difference between levels with regard to listening (see Figure 5).

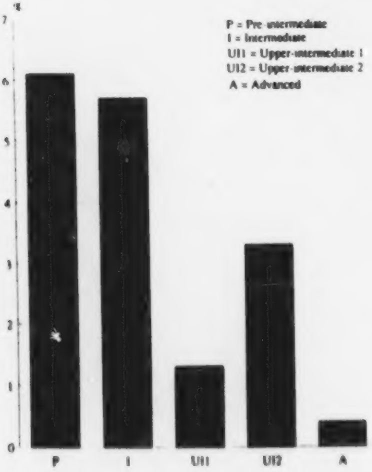


Figure 5: Proportion of time spent on listening by each class. Data based on Records of Work.

The data in the Observation instrument differs from that in the Records of Work because in the former, the category /L/ (listening) referred to listening at the booths in the Study Room, and the category / LL / (Language laboratory) referred only to movement by students into the Language laboratory and not what weht on there, as this area was not included in our investigation. The Records of Work, however, confirmed by data in the student interviews, revealed that students also did 'listening' in the Language Laboratory.

We can see that listening is more frequent at the lower levels and that there is a marked decrease as we move up the ability scale. This may be due to the difficulty lower-level learners experience with listening outside the classroom in the English-speaking environment; conversation, television and film will be less accessible to them than to those with a higher proficiency in English.

Listening in the Study Room session gives them the opportunity to work at their own pace on materials at their level and with a tapescript; listening material is accessible and, on the whole, user-friendly. Moreover, learners are less likely to be disturbed by others, including the teacher, once ensconced at a booth. Perhaps listening is perceived as the 'easiest' option for learners at this level.

Learners at the higher levels, in contrast, are able to cope more easily with real-life listening. In class, a wider range of authentic material is used with them and there is less general material for them in the Study Room. They may also have other priorities. The figures for the second Upper-Intermediate class, however, indicate a greater proportion of time spent on listening than the other high level classes. This was due to two particular students who felt very weak in listening and spent almost all the time on listening practice so skewing the results.

Writing

There is also a difference between levels in the amount of time spent on writing (see Figures 6 and 7), with the most marked difference between Pre-Intermediate and the other levels.

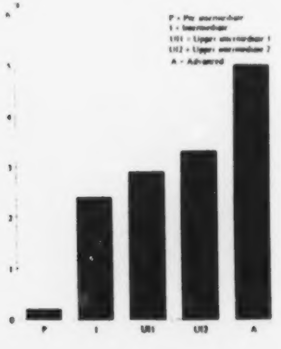


Figure 6: Proportion of time spent on writing by each class. Data based on Observation instrument.

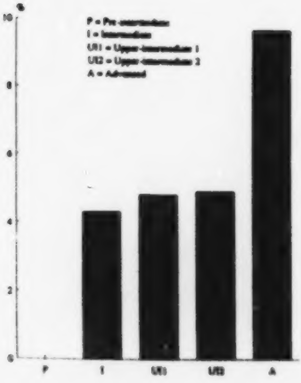


Figure 7: Proportion of time spent on writing by each class. Data based on Records of Work.

There is a difference in the proportions between the two sets of figures because the coding on the Observation Instrument under the category /W/ (multi-skills work) will have included some writing, while learners recorded what they perceived as the predominant activity even if it involved other skills. Nevertheless, the patterns are similar - little or no writing at Pre-Intermediate level, with an increase in the proportion of time spent on writing at the higher levels.

This is perhaps not surprising. For Pre-Intermediate learners, writing is not only more difficult as an individual activity but is of low priority in comparison to listening and speaking. In class time, writing done at Pre-Intermediate level tends to be more structured, of shorter length and involves a cooperative approach. In the upper levels, though a cooperative approach may be used initially, it remains an essentially solitary activity and the Study Room provides the opportunity for access to the teacher for advice and to reference books for consultation; the latter would not be easily accessible to lower-level learners. Moreover, learners in the higher level classes often undertake individual research projects and may have special needs such as examinations or writing tasks for Business English.

Grammar

There is a difference between levels with regard to the proportion of time spent on grammar (see Figure 8), with the most marked difference at Pre-Intermediate and Intermediate levels.

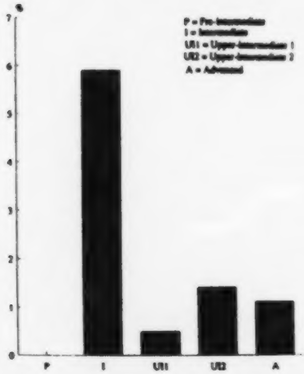


Figure 8: Proportion of time spent on grammar by each class. Data based on Records of Work.

It can be seen that the Pre-Intermediate level spends no time on grammar, whereas Intermediate learners spend the greatest amount of time on it. There is very little grammar material available in the Study Room for lower levels, particularly in self-access format, whereas there is a wide range for Intermediate level upwards. We should point out, however, that all learners are issued with a grammar book for self-access use by another class teacher and that the coursebooks have grammar reference sections and exercises. We can assume, therefore, that grammar work is done by many learners across levels outside the Study Room session.

Moreover, from our teaching experience, we have found that higher level learners tend to be more interested in expanding their knowledge of vocabulary and idioms or discussing the finer points in structure in class with the teacher - points which are generally not covered so effectively in grammar books.

That grammar figures so highly at Intermediate level is interesting, however. This may be because many learners at this level have reached a 'plateau' and studying grammar is perceived as one concrete way of making progress; or they consider, now that they are living in an English-speaking country, that their previous knowledge of grammar is inadequate.

4.2 Perceptions of the purpose and usefulness of the Study Room session.

4.2.1 Purpose

Overall, learner perceptions of the purpose of the Study Room do not differ from our own. In an open-ended question in the interview on what they saw as the purpose of the Study Room session, 50% of the students specifically mentioned the opportunity to work on their own and follow their own needs and interests, and to have individual access to the teacher:

> "the teacher is there to help if necessary which is very useful"
> "students can do what they want with some guidance from the teacher initially"
> "students have different needs - can correct own faults"
> "students need individual study time and to be able to choose what they want to do"

Other responses include the opportunity it provides for language practice on systems and skills, to discover new things, and to familiarise themselves with material and facilities. Affective factors were also mentioned, such as, "a chance to relax", and "peaceful atmosphere".

The data shows that the learners do spend most of their time working individually. But, of course, this does not mean that the teacher is inactive for although no individual student spends a long time talking to the teacher, the teacher often spends the entire session talking to individual students. Also, learner perceptions of discussions with the teacher differ from ours; one student who had spent at least 30 minutes with his teacher talking about his essay in fact recorded this as 'writing'.

The data also shows that most of the work in the Study Room is determined by the learner rather than the teacher and confirms the students' comments on the opportunity "to do what they want". This does not take into account, however, that learners may have been recommended to work on particular areas of language by other class teachers and that, at the beginning of term, all students had been introduced to the Study Room and may have been directed towards material appropriate for their needs and interests.

However, the comments by the learners may represent an ideal view of the Study Room session. The students will have had previous experience of some kind of library or study room and that experience, combined with the name 'Study Room' will have raised certain expectations as to the nature of the session. One student commented "The name 'Study' leads you to work."

In response to the question on what teachers saw as the purpose of the Study Room session, all of them mentioned the same positive points as the learners, i.e. the opportunity for learners to work on their own and develop independence, follow their own needs and interests and to have individual discussions with the students.

However, discussions between teacher and students tend to be more teacher-initiated than learner-initiated and this is confirmed by data in the Observation Instrument, the narrative accounts and in the teacher questionnaires. This may reflect a general underlying unease, as expressed by one teacher, "if I just sit and do nothing" or it may be due more to the personality and personal philosophy of the teacher - that she should create opportunities for talk about students' work or even personal matters - "I use the time for 'tutorials' - probably more useful for providing attention rather than helping all that much." It might also reflect a desire on the part of the teachers to ensure that students are using the time 'fruitfully'.

The teachers, too, may have an ideal view since various anxieties were also expressed as to the management of it and some aspects of learner behaviour. A few teachers commented that there may be some resistance from some learners to "a non-teacher-fronted class session" and that there are some learners who are unable to determine for themselves what to do. Other teachers mentioned the need for some kind of "training" of learners for more self-directed learning:

> "I feel many learners don't benefit as much as they could - perhaps they need more direction".
> "It will never work with some students unless more time is spent on 'training' them".

The ideal view versus reality is aptly summed up by one teacher ;

> "There is a two-way pull: one way, we wish to give them a free hand in what they choose to do; the other, we want to ensure that their time isn't wasted. The problem with 'learner training' is the attempt to reconcile these two in this environment."

The anxieties expressed by this teacher were not confirmed in the students' data. Only two learners were unsure of what the purpose of the Study Room session was; one because he did "the same things here with or without the teacher present", the other felt it was boring sometimes because "I'm not good at organising myself".

Nor were there any negative comments in the students' data about the teacher's role or behaviour, although it is clear from the narrative description that behaviour differed among teachers in terms of whether they sat and waited for students to approach them or whether they moved among the students, talking to some of them. This behaviour may relate to the language level of the class concerned but it may be due more to the personality and the personal philosophy of the teacher, as mentioned above.

4.2.2 Usefulness

Overall, learner responses to a question on the usefulness (i.e. that they learn something) of the Study Room session were favourable.

YES	25
NO/NOT REALLY	3
NOT SURE	3
SOMETIMES	2

The reasons given frequently overlapped with the responses to the question on the purpose of the Study Room. A few students, however, said that they had found it more useful when they first came than now. These tended to be long-term students i.e. those who had come the previous term; they may have exhausted the available material or it may be because they were not as strongly motivated as previously. Such comments echo, in part, the findings of St. John (1988) but they may also be due to the fact that the students had devised alternative strategies for improving their English, strategies which they had developed while living in an English-speaking environment, involving contact with native speakers.

Although the overall response to the questions on the purpose and usefulness of the Study Room session was favourable, this does not mean that there is no scope for improvement. More than 50% of the learners requested additional materials for both language practice and reading, especially unsimplified novels, and reference books of a general non-EFL type. More listening material was specifically requested by Pre-Intermediate level students.

Other suggestions included improvement to the lay-out, such as small tables for individual study, a better cataloguing system, and regular checking of faulty tapes and equipment. Self-access video facilities were also requested by several students. No student stated that the time-tabled Study Room session should be abolished !

5. Conclusion

The research team asked two questions. What do learners do in the Study Room session? What are their perceptions of the purpose and usefulness of the session in language learning?

Though the sample is small and we must be cautious about the claims we make, we can see that what learners do in the Study Room session depends on their level, their needs and on the materials available: reading is common across all levels; a greater proportion of time is spent on listening by lower-level learners; and writing assumes greater importance among higher-level learners.

The data reveals that the learners see the session as helpful to them as language learners - an opportunity for individually- determined private work and as a chance to consult the teacher. However, some of the choices made by the students may reflect the learners' own ability to work independently or be influenced by either another class teacher's advice or the present class teacher's behaviour.

All this has implications for the resourcing of the Study Room, e.g. a continued development of listening materials for lower levels. In addition, the unease expressed by teachers on their management of and student use of the session raises the question of the need for learner- and teacher-training for self-access. Whether timetabled Study Room sessions actually assist language learning, as opposed to perceptions that they do, can only be determined by some future empirical investigation.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank both the students and staff of General English at the Institute for their assistance in the trialling of material, and especially Gibson Ferguson for his invaluable help and advice throughout the investigation and the writing-up stage.

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Appendix

A: The General English timetable

Session A (9.15 - 10.45 am) Understanding and using grammar and vocabulary and developing reading skills.

Session B (11.15 - 12.45 pm) Developing listening, writing and study skills.

Session C (2.00 - 3.40 pm) Developing speaking skills through a variety of activities including projects which allow students to meet local people.

B. Student interview

1. Do you feel you have learned anything in the Study Room session today?
2. What do you feel is the purpose of the 11.15 session in the Study Room?

3a. Do you feel the 11.15 session helps you to learn English?

If yes - How? If no - why not?

3b. Do you do anything else to help you learn English?

4. Do you use the Study Room at any other times?
5. Do you have any suggestions for improving the Study Room?

C. Teacher questionnaire

1. What do you think is the purpose of the 11.15 SR session?
2. Have you any comments to make about the 11.15 session with a particular class?
3. How do you feel the session actually works (as opposed to the theory of it)? How comfortable do you feel about managing such a session?
4. What do you think about the present layout, resources etc of S.R.?

IS IT OR IS IT NOT INTERLANGUAGE? A HEAD-ON CONFRONTATION WITH NON-NATIVE ENGLISH

L. K. Owusu-Ansah (DAL)

Abstract

Deviation from native-speaker norms in non-native varieties of English (NNE) are often regarded as interlanguage features which must either be weeded out through teaching or which the learner will eventually abandon as his competency moves in the direction of the target language. It is argued in this paper that some deviations are motivated by style, even though they may reflect first language-influence. To support this argument the language of university students in Ghana was analysed with emphasis on instances of coordination which break grammatical rules. The conclusion reached is that coordination is not an interlanguage feature in Ghanaian English, but rather different types of coordination are used to signal varying levels of formality in social interaction. The paper goes on to draw some implications of this conclusion.

1 Introduction

Most of us working on non-native varieties of English (NNE) can remember at least one occasion on which we have been asked: How can you be sure that what you're looking at isn't an interlanguage phenomenon? In the heyday of error and contrastive analyses concern over treating NNE as varieties in their own right was expressed more directly, for example:

> On the large issues [Sey] is not silent, but wisely tentative, modestly refuting only those who have wished to rush too hastily to judgement ... and doubting the overhasty elevation of deviation through error into the dignity of Ghanaianisms.
>
> (Spencer, Foreword to Sey, 1973: x)

One way of answering this question is to provide details about one's informants and the circumstances in which the English language is used. For Ghanaian English, which is my primary interest, the catalogue includes the fact that English has been used in Ghana for over three hundred years, that it is used for both internal and external purposes, and that it is a taught subject as well as a medium of instruction from primary school upwards. My particular informants, who are university students, have been using English for at least fifteen years and have achieved credit in the GCE Ordinary Level Examinations administered by the West African Examinations Council.

One gets the impression that, even though this is a good attempt at answering the question, it does not actually address the central issue, which is about the language and not the users. In effect, the question can be rephrased as: What is there in the language to support the claim that it is a stable rather than an interlanguage variety? Asking the question in this form challenges one to focus attention on the language.

Without diminishing the importance of information about the user, this paper seeks to tackle the issue of whether NNEs are interlanguage varieties or not from the point of view of the form and function of the English language as used in Ghana. Though the discussion will be based on observations about how the language is used in one country, much of it has wider application.

2. Interlanguage models and variation

Two main approaches to interlanguage can be identified, namely (a) rationalist, also referred to as the Homogeneous Competence Paradigm, and (b) variationist or variabilist model (Gregg 1990). The first of these relies heavily on the theories of the generative-transformational school of linguistics and in particular maintains a fine distinction between competence and performance. Researchers within this tradition see interlanguage as a homogeneous phenomenon and treat observed variation as features of performance, not significant, on the whole, for theory construction.

The variationist model, on the other hand, does not accept the competence-performance dichotomy without question. As 'variation' implies, researchers within this framework make variation a central component of their theory of second language acquisition (Ellis 1990, Tarone 1990). This means that second language is "studied in social context" (Tarone 1990: 394).

Despite the efforts of the variationists, the views of the rationalist school are still widely accepted and occur frequently in discussion of NNEs. Hence the need to pose the initial question. Although the title of this paper creates the impression that there is a clear-cut answer, it has to be admitted that NNEs are not uniform varieties. The term 'variety' refers to a way of speaking and writing (English) associated with a group of people or geo-political area in terms of its form and functions, as well as the historical development of the language. Variation in one form or another is an important characteristic of any variety, whether native or non-native.

Taking Ghanaian English (GE) for example, it exhibits two forms of variation: (a) situational vaiation and (b) errors. The first is due to demands of style and register, and the second to slips and an inadequate grasp of the grammar of English. The distinction between the two types of variation is not as clear- cut as it is often thought. This indeterminacy underscores the need to ask our question, since aspects of a variety can profitably be studied under the rubric of interlanguage, though others may not.

It is argued in this paper that the question can be answered adequately only in relation to the use of the language by a small, close-knit group. This is not admitting the speaker through the backdoor; rather it ensures that one does not resort to too many exceptions in accounting for deviations from an established pattern. For this reason, I propose to answer the question using data provided by university students in Ghana.

3. The problem

The issue at stake is how to account for coordination in Ghanaian English. In this variety two types of coordination can be observed. The first type, referred to in this paper as "normal coordination", conforms to the rules of grammar which may be summarised as follows:

(a) Coordination in English involves similar grammatical elements, e.g. noun + noun, verb + verb, adjective + adjective.

(b) Coordination involves elements of equal grammatical rank, e.g. morpheme + morpheme, word + word, group + group, clause + clause. (See Huddleston 1984, Quirk and Greenbaum 1973).

The second type of coordination occurring in Ghanaian English does not obey the rules described above. Such constructions are therefore referred to as "odd couples". They will be illustrated presently, but since odd couples occur in native English too, a few examples may prove illuminating at this stage.

1. Are you coming or what?

2. He must be crazy or something.

3. The computer room is full of floppy discs, manuals, printers and what have you/ and what not/ and so on.

These examples are "odd" not because they are not acceptable, for that is clearly not the case; but because they do not appear to obey the rules presented in reference books.

4. The data

The data from which the odd and normal couples are drawn were provided by university students for a study into formality in Ghanaian English. They were collected in recent fieldwork, though some of the written texts had been produced earlier. The language samples used are authentic in that they had been produced to meet a communication need and therefore reflect actual usage rather than the language of role play.

For the purpose of investigating the types and distribution of coordination in the English spoken and written by the informants, personal letters, non-personal letters, academic essays and resolutions were looked at. Some of the findings are presented below. As expected the coordinations range from normal through various degrees of oddness.

4. It was good to be back in school. I had missed a lot of my friends and we spent lots of time chatting. [From a personal letter].

5. I was really tired and since I planned leaving early in the morning I thought it best to catch some sleep early. [From a personal letter].

6. The daily attendance at the hospital and the severity of the pain in the eye have prevented me from attending lectures. [From a letter to the Hall Warden].

7. Realising that the administration has maintained a communication gap with reference to the commercialisation and privatisation of certain infrastructure and facilities on campus, Do hereby resolve and be it irrevocably, immutably and unequivocably resolved that ... [From a resolution].

8. What do you think it will be? Would it be precious stone, would it be clay or rock? [From a religious testimony]

9. But this is all you've done or you've got a lot. [From a conversation between two friends].

10. When are you going to finish your course? and (sic) when are do you intend to come down immediately? [From a personal letter].

11. You always spell my name [Mensah] without the 'h'. Is it an oversight or the name is too long? [From a personal letter].

12. I mean is Scotland part of Great Britain? Is it in England or it is a different country? [From a personal letter].

13. Did you stay on campus for the Easter break or all the pals went home. [From a personal letter].

14. Do you like the semester system or you would have preferred the terms? [From a personal letter].

15. Was it just random sampling or you planned it? [From a personal letter].

5. Discussion

From the examples cited above it is obvious that the informants have no difficulty in constructing normal coordinations at different grammatical levels, i.e. word, group and clause. In (4), for instance, the coordination is between *I was really tired* and *I thought it best to catch some sleep early*. The presence of the intervening clause, *since I planned leaving early*, does not present any problems for the writer. In fact examples (6) and (7) show even greater sophistication. A perfect balance can be observed in *the daily attendance at the hospital and the severity of the pain in the eye*, while (7) illustrates four types of coordination in what is only part of an orthographic sentence. These are:

(a) noun + noun: *commercialisation and privatisation*

(b) noun group + noun group: *certain infrastructure and facilities on campus*

(c) adverb + adverb: *immutably and unequivocably*

(d) clause + clause: *Do hereby resolve and be it --- resolved.*

It can thus be concluded that coordination does not constitute an interlanguage problem for the informants. However, this conclusion need to be justified in the light of examples (9-15), all of which are odd in one way or another.

5.1 What makes a couple odd

The couples in (9-15) appear odd for different reasons. Since they are isolated from the original context of situation in which they were used, some explanation is called for.

Example (9) is taken from a conversation between two friends about a product one of them has invented. In the context in which it is uttered it functions as a question but contrary to the practice in native English, both clauses have falling rather than rising intonation. The first clause appears to carry a challenge which is mitigated in the second. The conjunction or, therefore, carries a different semantic load than in native English, where it usually introduces an exclusive alternative (Quirk and Greenbaum 1973).

With (10), which is taken from a personal letter, the oddness is more clear-cut. Two questions have been coordinated but the first one is a non-polar question while the second one is a yes-no question. This sort of coordination occurs most frequently in a face-to-face interactive discourse where it is often used to join various elements because the speaker wishes to ward off competition for the floor by indicating that he has more to say. A similar feature, called pre-pausal conjunction, is noted by Crystal and Davy (1975) in native English conversation. But its use in the written mode in native English is virtually unknown and thus emphasises the oddness of the present example.

The rest of the examples follow the same pattern: in each case a polar question is coordinated with what appears to be a statement, with the aid of or. Here or retains the function it has in English in that it primarily introduces an exclusive alternative. However, the final declarative structure with fallen intonation, when spoken or read, would seem to suggest that the speaker or writer is more certain about the propositional content of that clause or that he prefers that one to hold true. These odd couples are therefore related to the type exemplified by (9), which carries a challenge in the initial clause and a mitigation in the final.

5.2 First language influence and odd couples

The effect a person's first language (L1) has on learning subsequent languages cannot be denied, but the exact nature of this influence is still not fully understood. It is well-known that interlanguage systems exhibit forms which cannot be traced to either the native or target language. Furthermore certain forms are best explained in terms of the interaction between the languages in contact rather than resulting from any one of them. In discussing L1 as a possible source of odd couples, it will be argued that an interlanguage approach is facile and diverts attention from systematic contextual variation which carries social meaning.

5.3 Questions and statements in Ghanaian Languages

In many Ghanaian languages, if not all, word order in yes-no questions and statements tends to be similar, with questions usually signalled either by differences in tone or a question particle or both. (See Dakubu 1988). The following sentences from Akan, the mother tongue of almost half of Ghana's population, illustrate the point.

16 a. Kofi rekọ Nkran
   b. Kofi is going to Accra.
17 a. Kofi reko Nkran a
   b. Is Kofi going to Accra?

The similarity between the two sentence-types may strike adherents to interlanguage models in general as the source of the "error" in (11-15). Attractive though this explanation may be, it still leaves a number of serious questions unanswered; for example:

(a) Why do Ghanaians correctly construct questions which involve no coordination?

(b) How does one explain the fact that even in coordination the initial question is always correctly formed?

(c) Why do odd couples appear to be restricted to personal letters and conversations between friends?

The aim of asking these questions is not to deny the role of L1 influence in the formation of odd couples, for there may well be a strong relationship between the two. Rather, it is to challenge the adequacy of a rationalist interlanguage explanation. It is argued in this paper that the form and distribution of odd couples are affected to a large extent by the level of formality of the situation in which they are used.

5.4 Coordination and formality

Most studies into linguistic formality do discuss coordination and subordination as correlates of informal and formal discourse respectively (e.g. Biber 1988). However, not much has been written on types of coordination and how they mark texts of different levels of formality. There is the occasional note on pre-pausal conjunction as a feature of casual conversation (Crystal and Davy 1975), but not much else.

There are at least two reasons for this. First, previous studies have been conducted in the framework of grammars of the formal written English, and such reference works usually do not discuss odd couples. Even the comprehensive corpus-based grammars like Quirk et al. (1985) do not pay specific attention to the subject. The Collins Cobuild English Grammar (1990) comments on one type of odd couple in English, the coordination of imperative and declarative constructions, under 'usage notes' rather than as a normal type.

Second, many previous studies appear to be hampered by statistics. Odd couples, even when they occur in speech, are marginal compared with normal ones. Because they do not occur in great numbers, they are not set up as an independent category, but rather counted as instances of coordination, and lose their identity in the process.

The position adopted in this paper is that the presence of a few odd couples is a more reliable indication of informality than a large number of normal coordinations. This statement is made with particular regard to Ghanaian English as exemplified in my corpus, but I suspect that it is also true of other varieties of English, both native and non-native. The observed fact is that whereas normal coordination, together with subordination, does occur in both formal and informal situations, all the recorded instances of odd couples in my sample occurred in informal discourse. Therefore, in terms of hierarchy, odd couples come before normal ones in the description of informal discourse.

5.5 Formality, the vernacular and the standard variety

Quirk has shown in his earlier writings that the notion of standard English does not exclude informal registers. He believes that standard English has a whole range of situational varieties. For many people, however, social interaction with close family members and friends is conducted in the variety they acquired as children or what may be referred to as their 'real first language'. The term vernacular is often used to described this variety.

In a bilingual community such as Ghana, the situation is similar to that in a monolingual society, though complicated somewhat by the use of more than one language. English and the Ghanaian languages share the burden of communication. The former is employed for administrative and academic purposes while the latter are mainly used for social interaction. But where interactants come from different language backgrounds, English is usually used even in informal situations. This form of English is different from the English of the impersonal letter, and academic essay in retaining many characteristics of the Ghanaian languages. The pronunciation and rhythm in particular both bear a remarkable resemblance to Ghanaian languages (see Criper-Friedman 1971, 1990). It is as though, unable to use the vernacular in all informal encounters, the Ghanaian speaker has adapted the English language to his social needs. It is in such situations that odd couples come into their own.

5.6 The social significance of odd couples

To dismiss odd couples as errors or to count them together with normal coordination is to ignore their role in expressing interpersonal meaning. Together with other linguistic features they signal the absence of social distance in interactions between close friends who enjoy the same status in relation to one another. Thus one would not expect odd couples to occur in public addresses, resolutions, and the minutes of a meeting. For these kinds of communication, which are marked by social distance, more native-like norms seem suitable.

In advancing this argument, one must be careful not to confuse people with the relationship that arises between then. Though it is people who use language, the relationship between them greatly influences the language they use. One implication of this is that the variety of English used in informal Ghanaian discourse, of which odd couples are a notable feature, is not restricted to one person or type of person. Speakers who want to express a certain level of solidarity with their addressees use it. Hence English language teachers may use it to fellow teachers or students with whom they are on friendly terms, even if they deny it when their attention is drawn to this fact. Once the right atmosphere of familiarity has been created, every one uses language in the most natural way possible.

6. What is Ghanaian English if not interlanguage?

Though I think what I shall say here applies to Ghanaian English in general, I shall answer this question with particular reference to English as spoken and written by university students of Ghana, which corresponds to Criper-Friedman's (1971, 1990) Type I. She describes this as "socially acceptable, internationally intelligible, Standard English containing fewer local features" (1990: 65). Types II and III show greater deviation from native varieties, being more like Ghanaian local languages. She adds (personal communication) that speakers of higher types use lower types when speaking to speakers of lower types.

I shall carry this argument further by stating that the English of the Ghanaian university student as a repertoire is composed of different types. He selects from this repertoire the type appropriate to the communicative situation in which he finds himself: Type I, which is more native-like, for formal situations and the other types for less formal situations.

Ghanaian English, therefore, presents a situation significantly different from an interlanguage system. Interlanguage presumes learners abandoning one approximation to the target language in favour of another closer to it. Ghanaian university students are users, not learners. They do not adopt more native-like forms the way learners do, but rather use them as the situation demands and express themselves in a more vernacular-like medium again as the situation demands.

For this sort of variety the term 'interlanguage' is inappropriate. I suggest the alternative 'bilingual variety', which takes into account the fact English is an additional language for the majority of speakers who live in communities where it is as a non-native variety. To take Ghana as an example, the total repertoire of the Ghanaian speaker of English can be described with the aid of the diagram below. According to this diagram, formal interaction in this bilingual system is either carried out in 'pure' GL or English, where pure means with as little codes-witching as possible. Informal interation, the shaded area, on the other hand, is conducted in a mixed GL and English. The exact nature of the 'mixed variety' cannot be discussed here, except to mention that it can be described at all levels of linguistic analysis, i.e. lexical, grammatical and phonological. Features from any of these levels may be exploited depending on the content, participants and role of discourse.

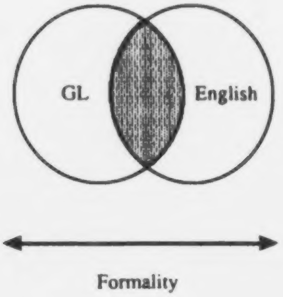

Fig. 1: The verbal repertoire of the Ghanaian speaker of English.

To conclude, the bilingual variety used by Ghanaians extends from forms heavily influenced by GL to those that are close to standard native varieties. The issue at stake here is to ensure that the forms observed at the GL end of the cline is not automatically consigned to the dustbin of error but to account adequately for the conditions in which they are used.

7. Implications

The foregoing discussion has implications of a descriptive and pedagogical nature. These will be elaborated below.

7.1 Describing NNE

NNEs have been given some attention, not as deviant forms of native English, but as varieties in their own right, following the work of Kachru (e.g. 1983, 1986, 1987) and others. The result is that we now know far more about NNEs than we did, say, twenty years ago. However, there is still a vast area of research to be covered. Whereas the battle has been won over the use of non-native forms in creative writing, their use in ordinary communication situations is still not favoured. Thus the more unusual varieties represented in the writings of Okara and Tutuola can be upheld in the name of literary creativity but odd couples are yet to be accepted not only by native but also some non-native speakers.

Two reasons account for this. First, the best-known descriptions of English are based on native forms. As yet, there is no recognised grammar of Indian English, for instance, and until the job of codifying NNE has been done, they will continue to be looked down upon. As has been proved over and over again, an adequate description of actual usage must be corpus-based. To the best of my knowledge there is no established corpus of any NNE variety comparable to the Brown Corpus or the London-Lund Corpus, which have greatly facilitated the investigation of native English forms. Such corpora have been collected and analysed by research teams, but it appears that up till now progress in NNE research has been made by researchers working in isolation rather than as a team.

There is an urgent need to pool resources, more so as the majority of NNE speakers live in the less affluent countries of the third world, where research funding is scarce. This need has now been recognised by the Corpus of International English (CIE) project under the directorship of Sidney Greenbaum, but the project is still limited to a few countries, notably India and Nigeria.

The second reason is the commonly-held view that deviation from normal usage is part and parcel of literary writing.

7.2 Pedagogical implications

Following from the lack of codified norms is the necessity to base current pedagogic practice in NNE areas on native models. The argument is often made that teaching native models has the effect of bringing the usage of non-native speakers closer to native norms. The reality is that what is often meant by native model is the highly modified version of the non-native teacher. Non-native usage masquerades as native norms. In addition the teacher's use of the English language is often different from the model he teaches in class. For example, outside the classroom, in an informal situation, teachers and students alike use odd couples without necessarily being aware that this is what they do. Inside the classroom, in a composition class, the teacher penalises their use and rightly so, though the fact is that the opportunity to do this does not often arise since the students are already capable of using odd couples in the appropriate context.

The prevailing state of affairs can best be described with the aid of a diagram such as Figure 2. According to this diagram the student is exposed to native models through listening to the external services of the BBC and the Voice of America as well as through watching television programmes originating from Britain, America and other native English countries. At the same time, he is influenced by the teacher's version of the standard variety in the classroom. Finally there is the influece of the actual usage around him including that of the teacher when he is not acting his role as English teacher. All this happens against the background of the local languages and culture.

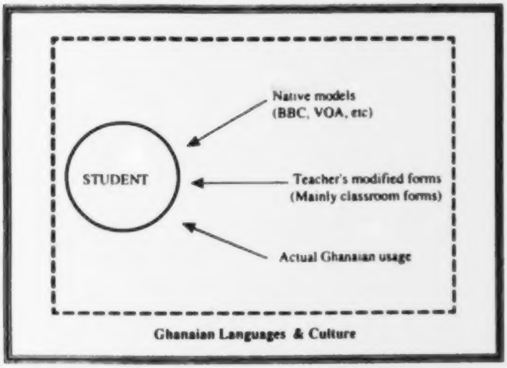

Fig.2: Three competing models of English in Ghana

This state of affairs suggests that it is pointless labelling some aspects of NNE usage as "error" when they are characteristic of everyone's speech.

8. Conclusion

Interlanguage approaches to NNE tend to ignore the fact that certain deviations are motivated by stylistic and social needs. For this reason, a good deal of caution should be exercised in applying such labels as "error", "mistake", and "interlanguage". Teachers have an important role to play in developing a new, healthy attitude to NNE but before then there is a pressing need for intensive research based on actual usage, and eventually leading to the codification of NNEs, involving teams of investigators pooling resources.

Note

1. This is a substantially revised version of a paper I presented to the DAL Staff-Postgraduate seminar under the title: "Odd couples: instances of coordination involving different grammatical structures in Ghanaian English". This version has benefited from the many useful suggestions made at the seminar. I also thank Lindsay Criper-Friedman for much helpful advice.

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CONDITIONALS AND THE EXPRESSION OF REGRET AND RELIEF: TOWARDS A FRAGMENT FOR A COMMUNICATIVE GRAMMAR

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Abstract

The paper begins with an outline of some desirable properties of a communicative-pedagogical grammar. This serves as a theoretical point of reference for the subsequent description of a narrowly bounded semantic area, that of regret and relief. Conceptual analysis reveals a systematic relationship between these two emotions, which is grammaticalized through the so-called 'unreal conditional'. The paper then investigates the pragmatic and discoursal circumstances that encourage the selection of a conditional exponent for the expression of regret. There is, finally, a brief discussion of pedagogical implications arising from the preceding description.

1. Introduction

This article investigates an area of grammar and language use that I shall provisionally label 'the use of conditionals in the expression of regret and relief'. The objective is to contribute a small fragment toward a communicative pedagogically-oriented description of English.

A second, perhaps equally important, objective is methodological. It is to exemplify further, following the work of Mitchell (1981, 1988, 1990), a possible approach to the task of providing descriptions of English that serve the purposes of communicative language teaching.

Both objectives call for some preliminary remarks addressed to the issue of what we might mean by a 'communicative, pedagogically-oriented grammar'.

2. Characteristics of a communicative grammar

My understanding of a 'communicative grammar' is that it takes as fundamental the language learner's interest in expressing and retrieving meanings. This perspective leads to a preference for making meaning (as studied through semantics and pragmatics) the starting-point and central organising principle of a communicative description.

Of course, there are already quite a number of reference works, course books and syllabus proposals that take meaning as their classificatory basis, and range alongside these meanings their lexico-grammatical realizations. It has to be said, however, that many exhibit a number of limitations which, taken together, obscure the potential scope of a communicative description. It may be as well, then, to rehearse some these limitations here.

First of all, the listed meanings (or notions) tend to remain unanalysed or uninterrogated with the result that there can be an under-elaboration of the range of 'meaning options' (Mitchell 1990) that a language user might wish to express. One remedy is a more careful conceptual analysis to make explicit and systematise a set of 'meaning options' for which there may or may not exist lexico-grammatical realizations in a given language. Such analysis may also reveal inter-relationships of meaning unsuspected on more superficial inspection. Once detected, these can be incorporated in a syllabus allowing greater economy in the presentation of new language to learners.

A further, oft-noted, limitation of the type of work that I am here caricaturing is that what they tend to present are simply correlations of notions (or functions) with their lexico-grammatical realizations. Missing is any elucidation of how these correlations come about - with the result that as arbitrariness comes to prevail over systematicity so the learning burden increases. What is needed is some account of the nature (and tightness) of the relationships obtaining between clusters of meanings and forms. Even better, as Mitchell (1981) suggests, would be their organisation into a system.

Yet again, some of these works seem to characterize inadequately the scope and nature of the choices that the lexico-grammatical resources of a language affords for the expression of given propositional or illocutionary meanings. Thus, while a language will often offer a variety of formal realizations for a given meaning, the choice between these is rarely free - being constrained by discoursal, pragmatic and cultural factors. Although many popular reference works and coursebooks give plausible accounts of the socio-cultural factors motivating particular formal choices, they tend to be less forthcoming about the influence of pragmatic or discoursal factors on grammatical choice.

This being so, a pedagogically useful communicative grammar should attempt to elucidate the full range of discoursal, pragmatic and cultural factors motivating selections of one formal exponent rather than another. The focus here is appropriacy of form to context, rather than of meaning to context, since the issue of whether it is appropriate, indeed permissible, to perform a particular speech act or express a particular meaning on a given occasion I regard as a matter better dealt with by the ethnographer of communication than the communicative grammarian.

The discussion thus far allows us to delineate by way of summary the following desirable properties of a communicative, pedagogically-oriented grammar.

(i) It should operate with meaning (semantics and pragmatics) as its starting point, and its main organising principle.

(ii) Within a semantically bounded area, it should make explicit the range of meanings a language user might wish to encode or decode, the interrelationship of these meanings, and their relation as a whole to other semantic areas. (cf Mitchell 1981, 1990)

(iii) It should specify the full range of lexico-grammatical realizations for the expression of each of the above meanings, and elucidate as systematically as possible the nature of the relationship holding between forms and meanings.

(iv) It should give some account of the discoursal, pragmatic and cultural factors motivating the selection of particular formal options (from a defined set of options) to express particular meanings.

An alternative way of summarizing these properties would be to say, following Rea-Dickins (1988, 1989) and Leech (1983), that a communicative grammar should, for any category of meaning, seek to relate three or possibly four levels of description: grammar in its narrower sense of 'structures' (i.e. syntax and morphology), semantics (the truth-functional study of propositional meaning), pragmatics (the study of meaning in language use as opposed to language as a formal, abstract system), and discourse (the study of the use of sentences in combination).

2.1 An approach to providing communicative descriptions

A procedure for developing communicative descriptions lies implicit in the preceding outline of some desirable characteristics of a communicative grammar. But I see little harm in making it more explicit, if only in recipe form. In so doing, I follow a route delineated by Mitchell (1990), who cites with approval the approach of Jespersen (1924).

Step 1: Circumscribe a semantic domain and strive to lay bare its conceptual structure. As we have said, failure to probe the conceptual features of a surface lexicalization may mean overlooking distinctions and relations of meaning between terms in a domain. The aim of this exercise is to identify a range of 'meaning options' that a speaker might wish to express, and to render explicit their interrelationship.

Step 2: Range the identified meanings alongside their lexico- grammatical exponents and elucidate the nature of the relationship obtaining between forms and meanings.

Step 3: Account for the various contextual factors - discoursal, pragmatic, socio-cultural - that may motivate the selection of one lexico-grammatical exponent rather than another.

Let us now test the feasibility of this approach through the investigation of our chosen area.

3. The concepts of regret and relief

Regret, which is akin to the emotions of sorrow and disappointment, has different possible sources. It may arise from circumstances lying outside the control of the speaker, or from past or present situations for which the speaker is prepared to assume some causal responsibility. Whichever is the case, a necessary feature is that regret is directed at situations which in some way earn the disfavour of the individual avowing regret. It would be anomalous, if not contradictory, for an individual to regret p, but simultaneously view p with approbation.

A qualification is necessary, however. First, to do with causation - a pervasive constituent of our conceptual apparatus (Mackie 1974). Human beings, it seems, are disposed to see situations not as discrete p's or q's but rather as participating in cause-effect relations, as p-q sequences. It is thus possible for an individual to regret a situation/act/event p not for its own sake (indeed, it might otherwise be seen as desirable) but because it is believed to be causally linked to another undesirable situation. For instance, I may regret lending my car (an act believed by some in our culture to indicate generosity) because of my belief that that act was causally linked to the subsequent injury of a friend in a motor accident.

The general point here is that many regret expressions are embedded in a quite complex matrix of causal beliefs. It is fairly common, therefore, for expressions of regret to focus only on the antecedent cause of some undesirable situation which itself remains unmentioned either because it is recoverable from the the context of the utterance, or because the speaker assumes it can be recovered from the causal beliefs which he shares with his interlocutor regarding the relations between p and q. Unfortunately or not, this latter assumption is sometimes not met. Individuals may not share the same causal beliefs, and in these circumstances the speaker may feel obliged to spell out the reasons for regretting p in terms of its causal relationship to q, which may be, as it were, the ultimate object of regret.

I shall come presently to the implications of this for the ways in which we can grammaticalize expressions of regret. But first, it is worth pointing out that regret expressions only qualify as such against a background of general evaluational beliefs. Individuals differ considerably in their evaluation of situations as more or less desirable, and, therefore, as appropriate objects of regret. This being so, some utterances can only be interpreted as expressions of regret given a background knowledge of the speaker's belief system, a state of affairs that often does not obtain. All the more reason, then, for expressions of regret to be explained either by some explicit reference to a standard of evaluation or, as we have said, by drawing the hearer's attention to causal relationships.

A further significant conceptual feature of regret is that it seems that in regretting p we imagine a possible world in which $\sim p$ where $\sim p$ is seen as the more desirable of the disjunct $p \vee \sim p$. In other words, sincere regret seems to involve wishing a state of affairs to be contrary to what it is or was.

Regret is thus volitional in character, but, like hope, only occupies part of the domain of volition. And since the notion of volition is partly rendered in terms of the English lexical verb 'wish', it is hardly surprising to find that expressions of regret can conventionally be realized in English by sentences of the form 'I wish (that) p' where the situation referred to in the clausal complement of 'wish' is past or present.

1. *I wish I had taken his advice.*
2. *I wish I knew the reason for his absence.*

One point about 'wish' as an exponent of regret is that it is a counterfactual predicate. That is, utterances of the form 'x wish (that) p' commit the utterer to the falsity of the proposition expressed by the embedded clause. Other predicates, which are more direct and transparent as exponents of regret (e.g. 'regret', 'sorry'), are by contrast factive. That is, they commit the utterer to the truth of the propositions expressed in their complements. So, where it is true that 'x regrets p', it must also be the case that p obtains.

It would seem, then, that in expressing regret we have, at a certain level of abstraction, two options. Either we can talk in terms of an actual world where the regretted situation p obtains, in which case we may use predicates such as 'regret' or 'sorry', or we can talk in terms of a possible or hypothetical world where the disjunct $\sim p$ obtains, in which case we may use predicates such as 'wish'. The table below illustrates some exponents of regret in terms of this very elementary opposition.

Table 1: Exponents of regret.

	Actual world		Possible (hypothetical) world
	[Factive predicates]		[Counterfactual predicates]
3.	*I regret that p.*	6.	*I wish that p.*
4.	*I regret that I insulted John.* *insulting John.*	7.	*I wish that I hadn't insulted John.*
5.	*I am sorry that I insulted John.*	8.	*If only I hadn't insulted John.*

(As far as I can tell, an utterance is precluded from being interpreted as an expression of regret if the embedded clause following 'wish' is infinitival or refers to a realisable future situation).

Note that both '*sorry*' and '*regret*' are predicates conventionally used in making apologies, it being a condition on apologizing, of course, that the act apologized for should actually have occurred, or be simultaneous with time of utterance. It is also normal for apologies to be addressed to the wronged person(s), this being one of the factors distinguishing expressions of regret from apologies.

Let us stay, however, with counterfactuals as expressions of regret because this affords an opportunity to introduce a hitherto unmentioned emotion, relief, which, I shall argue, is semantically related to regret.

In expressing regret, one notes the existence, past or present, of an undesirable situation p but envisages a possible world where $\sim p$ obtains - hence the cause for regret. In expressing one kind of relief, on the other hand, one envisages a possible world containing an undesirable situation p but notes that in the actual world p did not, or does not, obtain - hence the cause for relief.

Thus, if one's point of reference is a situation evaluated as desirable, the non-actuality of that situation may be a cause for regret, and the contrary, the actuality of the situation, if it was once in doubt, a cause for relief. Conversely, if the initial point of reference is an undesirable situation, the actuality of that situation p, given a possible world containing $\sim p$, will be a cause for regret, and the contrary, the non-actuality of p, given a possible world containing p, a cause for relief.

Now, if regret and relief belong to a semantic system of oppositions, centering on distinctions between actual and possible worlds containing desirable or undesirable situations, one may ask how this relationship is reflected in the grammar.

The answer lies in the counterfactual conditional construction - what pedagogic grammars refer to as the 'unreal' or 'type 3' conditional. Thus, an utterance such as 9 below may express, or be interpreted as expressing, relief, and an utterance like 10 below, regret.

9. *If I hadn't known the answer, I would have failed the test.*
10. *If I had taken his advice, I would have passed the test.*

Note, as mentioned previously, that the interpretation of these utterances as expressing relief and regret respectively depends crucially on knowledge of the speaker's belief system; in this particular instance, that failing tests is not in general a good thing.

A further point - which I want to expand later - is that while the constituent clauses of the two utterances above refer to situations located in past time, it is perfectly possible for the antecedent clause (the protasis) of a conditional expressing regret or relief to refer to a past situation and the consequent clause (the apodosis) to a present time situation, as in 11.

11. *If I had taken his advice, I wouldn't be in this present trouble.*

Alternatively, both clauses may refer to present time situations, as in (12).

12. *If I knew her telephone number, I would invite her to the party.*

Excluded is the possibility of the antecedent referring to present time situations and the consequent to a past time simply because conditionals used to express regret or relief are interpreted as positing a causal relationship between antecedent and consequent, and it is questionable, to say the least, whether effects can temporally precede their causes. More of this later, however. For the present, let us concentrate on attempting to construct a system from these forms used to express regret or relief.

If, then, one considers a set of conditional sentences of the same form but where there are different distributions of negation between the sentences, and their constituent clauses, one can see that this differential distribution of negation, by affecting the inferences drawn, determines in conjunction with extra-linguistic evaluations whether or not a particular sentence expresses regret or relief. In other words, from the application of differing polarity choices within the clauses there emerges 'a symmetrical pattern of equivalences' (Mitchell 1981: 111). The following table appears to represent an inverse relationship between expressions of regret and relief as realized through the so-called 'unreal' conditional.

Table 2: Regret and relief.

REGRET		RELIEF	
Antecedent	Consequent	Antecedent	Consequent
13. If p ,	q. (+)	If not p ,	not q. (+)
+	+	-	-
(a) *If I had taken his advice* ,	*I would have passed the exam.*	(b) *If I hadn't taken his advice* ,	*I wouldn't have passed the exam*
Inference: x (take advice) - x (pass exam) -		Inference: x (take advice) + x (pass exam) +	
Antecedent	Consequent	Antecedent	Consequent
14. If p ,	not q (-)	If not p ,	q (-)
+	-	-	+
(a) *If I had looked carefully* ,	*I wouldn't have cut my hand.*	(b) *If I hadn't looked carefully* ,	*I would have cut my hand.*
Inference: x (look carefully) - x (cut hand) +		Inference: x (look carefully) + x (cut hand) -	
Antecedent	Consequent	Antecedent	Consequent
15. If not p ,	q (+)	If p ,	not q (+)
-	+	+	-
(a) *If I hadn't missed the penalty* ,	*I would have won the match.*	(b) *If I had missed the penalty* ,	*I wouldn't have won the match.*
Inference: x (miss penalty) + x (win match) -		Inference: x (miss penalty) - x (win match) +	
Antecedent	Consequent	Antecedent	Consequent
16. If not p ,	not q (-)	If p ,	q (-)
-	-	+	+
(a) *If I hadn't spoken carelessly* ,	*I wouldn't have got into trouble.*	(b) *If I had spoken carelessly* ,	*I would have got into trouble.*
Inference: x (speak carelessly) + x (get into trouble) +		Inference: x (speak carelessly) - x (get into trouble) -	

[The '+' or '-' sign in brackets after q indicates the desirability or undesirability of q for the speaker. The '+' or '-' signs under 'p' or 'q' indicates the polarity of the clauses. The '+' or '-' signs under the heading of 'Inference' indicates what can be inferred regarding the actuality of the situations referred to in the antecedent and consequent clauses.]

Note from this table that if the situation q referred to in the consequent clause is evaluated as desirable, the consequent in a counterfactual conditional cannot be negated and at the same time be used to express regret. Equally, if the situation in the consequent is undesirable, the consequent cannot have negative polarity and simultaneously express relief. Both restrictions are the outcome of the interaction of the evaluation of the desirability, or otherwise, of the situation with the effect of negation on the inference drawn as to the existential status of those situations.

It may be useful at this juncture to summarise the dicussion so far. Our starting-point was a conceptual analysis of regret, on the basis of which we identified some of its commoner exponents. This then led, by way of a consideration of counterfactuality, to a particular grammatical construction, the so-called 'unreal' or 'type 3' conditional, which, by virtue of its underlying semantic characteristics, can have the communicative function of expressing two systematically inter-related emotions, regret and relief. Whether a given conditional sentence of this type actually expresses regret or relief seems to depend, among other factors, on the evaluation of the desirability of a situation and on what can be inferred from the form of the counterfactual conditional regarding the existential status of that situation.

From a pedagogic point of view, the discussion suggests how regret and relief might profitably be grouped in a teaching unit which itself might fall within some broader category dealing with the expression of emotion.

What we have not done so far is identify precisely which conditional constructions can express regret or relief. To do so would require considerable further elaboration, so I propose at this point simply to suggest the following points. In order for a conditional to express regret or relief, it should minimally have the following semantic characteristics:

(i) there should be a causal link between antecedent (p) and consequent (q)

(ii) it should involve past or present time reference (not future)

(iii) the antecedent or consequent, or both, should receive a counterfactual interpretation.

Let us now turn to the pragmatics of the use of conditionals to express regret or relief.

4. Context and the use of conditionals to express regret or relief

In the present section the objective is to explain the pragmatic circumstances under which a full conditional construction is selected to express regret or relief when there are other perfectly adequate ways of doing so. As an initial step, we may recall that in conditionals expressing regret and relief a causal link obtains between p and q. Taking this together with Levinson's (1983: 290) point that single sentence utterances can simultaneously perform more than one speech act, one might suggest that conditionals of the kind represented in Table 2 can be expressions of regret/relief and at the same time explanations of them. To elaborate, let us extract a sentence from that table as an example:

14a. *If I had looked more carefully, I wouldn't have cut my hand.*

This full conditional might well be a response to an enquiry from an addressee regarding the motivation for an earlier remark by the speaker of the form '*I wish I'd looked more carefully*'. In these circumstances the utterance of 14a serves to explain the earlier expression by making explicit the causal link of p to an undesirable situation q.

Put more explicitly, what is going on here is that from the speaker's initial utterance '*I wish that p*' the addressee, inferring that not p is the case and that this is intended as an expression of regret, nevertheless remains puzzled - firstly because in his estimation 'not looking carefully' is insufficiently undesirable in itself to merit regret and secondly because there is for him no stable and singular causal association between the mentioned p and an undesirable, unmentioned q. He, therefore, asks the question - '*why*', seeking a motivation for the utterance of p in terms, perhaps, of its causal relation to a hitherto unknown q.

By this stage, of course, p is part of the interlocutors' shared knowledge. It is given and topicalized. The speaker's response then is, as we have said, to explain his earlier utterance in terms of the causal relation of a p to a q. He does this by means of the utterance of a counterfactual whose antecedent refers to a hypothetical situation which is in contrast to the established actual situation, and whose consequent presents a new outcome causally resulting from that hypothetical situation.

A schematic formula for this exchange, following the notation of Ford and Thompson (1986), would be as follows:

Not X. (But) if X, then not Y. [i.e. X cause (not y)]

(this is the converse of 'X. (But) if not x, then Y'.)

What this formula brings out is the fact that the counterfactual antecedent, as in many other cases, acts to signal a contrast with a situation whose actuality is already established in the previous discourse. The conditional clause is, then, as Haiman (1978) and Ford and Thompson (1986: 357) suggest, a topic providing shared knowledge for the interpretation of the following material. In this instance, however, it is a contrastive topic in that it offers a contrast to a situation already established.

In the circumstances described above, it is, of course, more probable that the speaker, trusting that p had sufficient recency of mention not to merit repetition, would simply respond to the addressee's enquiry with '*I wouldn't have cut my hand*'.

This leads us to another alternative: that 14a might be uttered as a conversational opener, rather than as an expansion of a previous remark in the discourse. However, this would require rather unusual circumstances since the more common expressions in this discoursal position are likely to be the half conditional '*if only.....*', or the '*I wish that p*' form. The onus is on us, then, to give an account of the circumstances inviting a full conditional.

One has, I think, to envisage a situation where the speaker believes, rightly or wrongly, that the addressee not only cannot recover q from the immediate context but is also unable to infer q from the antecedent p. One must also suppose that p is not sufficiently undesirable to be in itself an apppropriate object of regret.

This last condition is necessary because it would be unusual to expand the following expressions of regret, say, by the utterance of a full conditional.

17 a. *I wish I hadn't insulted John.*
b. *I wish the fatal accident hadn't happened.*

The reason is clear. There is a wide consensus that, other things being equal, insults and fatal accidents are undesirable, hence regrettable, not because they are causally or contingently associated with other undesirable eventualities, but because they are so in themselves. It would be strange, then, to explain regret for insulting John in terms of its consequences. Indeed, to do so would imply either that the addressse did not understand what insults were, or that the speaker and addressee shared an amoral, Machiavellian outlook on human conduct. Perhaps the same factor also explains why it seems more natural to express regret for insults, or any other obviously undesirable situations, in terms of the predicate '*wish*' rather than the half-conditional '*if only....*', since the use of the latter may imply a calculated consideration of consequences.

Let us sum up. In this section we have argued that full conditionals expressing regret or relief may at the same time be explanations, particularly where they expand regret expressions occurring earlier in the discourse. We also argued that conditionals are unlikely to be selected to express regret in preference to other forms when the speaker believes that the addressee can recover the undesirable situation q either directly from the context itself or by inferring q from the mention of p through exploiting a knowledge of causal relations. A full conditional is also unlikely when a situation is adjudged undesirable in itself irrespective of its causal associations.

Finally, as regards discourse, we suggested that the counterfactual antecedent clause of conditionals cohere with the preceding discourse by introducing a hypothetical situation which is in contrast to a assumed actual situation. The consequent then presents a new, and more desirable situation, resulting from that hypothetical situation. In other words, the counterfactuality of the conditional clause signals a contrast, and this provides a basis of shared knowledge for the interpretation of the material in the consequent. To that extent the conditional clause is, as Haiman (1978) argues, a topic.

5. Conclusion and pedagogic implications

On the assumption that the implementation of a procedure offers some indication of its feasibility, let us turn our attention immediately to the descriptive information that our procedure has provided.

Our initial conceptual analysis revealed a semantic relationship between regret and relief which appeared to be instantiated in grammar in the so- called 'type 3' conditional. This was seen to possess a communicative potentiality for expressing either emotion. By constructing a table, we were able to show how this communicative potentiality might be realised in a unified system of lexico-grammatical options.

We then suggested without further elaboration that for a conditional construction to express either emotion there has to be (i) a causal link between antecedent and consequent, (ii) past or present time reference, and (iii) the antecedent or consequent should receive a counterfactual interpretation.

Finally, we sketched out the pragmatic and discoursal circumstances inviting a full conditional as opposed to a half-conditional with either a suppressed antecedent or a suppressed consequent. The discussion at this point can, however, only be regarded as suggestive, and not as comprehensive. Clearly, further investigation is required.

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Let us turn finally to the pedagogic implications. A sceptical observer might point out that we have only dealt with a very small area of grammar, and one that does not have a particularly frequent occurrence in ordinary discourse at that. One can, I think, concede these points without damage to the overall thrust of the argument.

Regarding the sceptic's latter point, my own observations of a limited corpus of conditional utterances suggest that full conditionals are, indeed, relatively rarely used to express regret or relief. However, from the limited frequency of an exponent of a function in a corpus based on native speaker interaction, it does not necessarily follow that there is little use in teaching that exponent to learners. We have already noted that full conditionals expressing regret or relief are, because of their explanatory function, more likely in situations where the evaluational or causal beliefs of speaker and hearer diverge. It strikes one that it is precisely these circumstances, calling for a greater degree of explicitness and explanatory work, that confront the non-native learner with a relatively higher frequency than the native speaker. If this is so, one might hypothesize that a full conditional for regret or relief may have a correspondingly higher utility.

In speaking of explanation, one is reminded that conditionals serve an explanatory function in other contexts: for example, in explaining or amplifying inferences and deductions. This is recognized in the EFL coursebook *Meanings into Words* (Doff, Jones and Mitchell 1984), which features the use of the type 2 and type 3 conditionals as explanations for inferences (Unit 7 'Deductions and Explanations'). An illustrative dialogue might run as follows:

18. *A:* *He can't be a doctor.*
B: *Why do you say that?*
A: *If he was a doctor, he would know what gangrene was.*

Notice that here there is a somewhat attenuated causal link between antecedent and consequent. It might be more appropriate, then, to characterize the nature of the link in terms of logical contingency. The point of mentioning this use of conditionals is to draw attention to the similarities betweeen conditionals used as amplifications of regret expressions and those used as explanations for inferences. The similarities suggest posssibilities for grouping these explanatory uses together for purposes of presentation and practice.

A rather useful exercise which does something along these lines can be found in *Prospects* (Percil and Gray 1988) in a chapter entitled 'Logical Relations'. The rubric for the exercise is as follows:

> *Suggest possible conditional 3 sentences prompted by the following. There is often more than one possibility.*

Under this rubric appear such statements as:

> *Some historians maintain that President Kennedy's assasination saved him from the unpopularity that would have come to him as a result of US involvement in Vietnam.*
>
> *The Challenger space-shuttle disaster was caused by unusually low temperatures immediately before the launch.*

To this exercise, which involves the reduction of causal assertions to counterfactual assertions, I would simply suggest the addition of utterances making inferences or expressing regret but which seem to invite some further amplification. Sentence 19 might be an example.

19. *I wish I had studied Greek at school.*

In answer to our sceptic's first point - that we have only dealt with a small area of grammar - I would point out again that one of our aims is methodological, and that, therefore, narrowness of scope is not necessarily reprehensible. After all, the present approach is not greatly different from that of the theoretical linguist whose narrowly focused descriptions are intended to make wider theoretical points.

With regard to methodological procedure, I think it is worth remarking finally that one of the merits of pursuing a semantic line of investigation is that it facilitates the identification of conceptual features which are shared across functional areas. These areas can then be usefully and illuminatingly grouped together, whereas, otherwise, they might be treated with in different parts of a pedagogic grammar. In this article, for example, we have noted how the shared conceptual features of regret and relief permit them both to be expressed through the 'third' conditional.

The identification of interrelationships at a semantic level, and the working out of their ramifications at the level of surface realizations, not only suggests alternative organizational possibilities in the grammar syllabus or materials. It also, I believe, affords an opportunity for drawing the attention of teachers to systematic relationships , for strengthening networks of associations. This may, in turn, help distance one from the type of content found in the traditional grammar syllabus that Rutherford (1987) unfavourably - and possibly correctly - characterizes in the following terms:

> What goes into such a syllabus (the 'familiar grammatical syllabus') for purposes of display, explication, and practice is an inventory of isolated constructs made available to pedagogy through some form of linguistic analysis.
>
> (Rutherford 1987: 157)

My final point is really Strawson's, who remarks that "the logic of ordinary speech provides a field of intellectual study unsurpassed in richness, complexity, and the power to absorb" (Strawson 1952: 232). I would simply add that such study may also have a practical spin-off in that it has the potential to contribute to more sensitive pedagogical-communicative descriptions of English, or, indeed, of any language.

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ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST FREE VARIATION

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Abstract

This paper argues that, on one hand, there are compelling theoretical reasons to believe that interlanguage (IL) grammars are both systematically and randomly variable, and that the relationship between the two types of variation is a complex one. At any one stage of IL development some structures may be systematically variable, but at the same time the existence of forms in free variation creates conditions conducive to systematic variation 'setting in' at a later stage of development. On the other hand, the paper argues, there is no incontestable empirical evidence for free variation, and concludes that the existence of free variation is based more on speculation than on empirical grounds..

1 Introduction

There is general agreement among second language researchers that IL is systematic, but less than full agreement about either the existence of free variability or the way to interpret some of the empirical studies often cited in support of free variation (Ellis 1985; Schachter 1986). In the absence of a consensus, the aims of this paper are to assess the weight of (i) the theoretical arguments and (ii) the empirical evidence, in support of free variation.

2 Theoretical arguments

The case for free variation has been advanced strongly by Ellis (1985a, 1985b, 1987, 1988), who makes a distinction between two main types. Firstly, there is free variation arising from changes in plan during utterance production. This usually occurs when there is a high degree of psycholinguistic pressure on the learner's control, particularly in unplanned discourse. This type of free variation, which can be called *performance variation*, has not attracted a great deal of interest among second language researchers and will not be discussed in this paper.

The second type of free variation is one which Bialystok and Sharwood Smith (1985) attribute to *knowledge* and occurs because a language learner has a number of conflicting rules in his IL competence. Conflict arises because he does not distinguish between them on linguistic, situational or discourse grounds. Their co-existence is made possible by the indeterminacy which characterizes IL grammars, due to their high degree of permeability, particularly in the early stages of IL development - although there are reasons to believe that some areas of IL may remain highly permeable even at very advanced stages of Il development.

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In the early stages of language learning, new forms are incorporated into the system to serve old functions. The new forms co-exist with the old and there is no differentiation in linguistic, situational or discourse function, since the learner still has to sort out the various functions which the forms are to serve. Thus, IL consists of two stages: the stage of assimilation or incorporation of forms, which is then followed by the stage of reorganisation. The first is characterised by non-systematicity; it is only during the second that systematicity 'sets in'.

The importance of free variation is that it generates the necessary psycholinguistic pressure conducive to the reorganisation of IL because the existence of forms in free variation increases the redundancy of the IL. This increases since the learner has a number of different ways of expressing the same function; hence the IL system becomes unreliable and inefficient in the way it exploits its resources.

The rise in redundancy results in the overloading of the IL system; hence it is likely to raise the chances of the system being reorganised for more efficient and reliable use of the available communicative resources. Reorganisation involves restricting some forms to either specific linguistic contexts or situations, thus rendering the IL systematic in areas that were previously random. The pressure to reorganise, and thus to reduce the scope of free variation, is a partial consequence of the violation of one of the salient principles of IL: that the language learner's grammar should not have more forms than is necessary to serve a specific function. This is consistent with what Andersen calls 'the one-to-one principle': "an interlanguage system should be constructed in such a way that an intended underlying meaning is expressed with one clear invariant form" (Andersen 1984: 59)

The idea that free variation raises the chances of the IL system being reorganised to facilitate efficient use of the learner's resources, although not empirically supported by sound research evidence, is consistent with what is currently known about human processing. For example, Schneider and Shiffrin's (1977) model, which has been extremely influential in SLA (see Ellis 1990), is based on the notion that human beings have limited processing abilities and have to deploy certain strategies in order to activate their knowledge effectively and easily.

The assumption is that, if human beings have limited information-processing abilities, language learners are likely to have more severely restricted capacity because some of their memory space (unlike that of monolinguals) will be taken up by storage of the second language. Consequently, if learners have to activate knowledge efficiently and rapidly, they have to reduce the extent of free variation in their IL system. The existence of free variation potentially distracts the learner's attention, unnecessarily slowing down the knowledge retrieval mechanism. One way of avoiding this is to reorganise the IL with the aim of reducing the extent of free variation.

Free variation is seen by Ellis (1985b, 1988) as one of the important phases of IL development because it is a precursor of systematicity. The most appropriate method of investigating free variation is through a longitidinal design, because there are some areas of language where forms may persist in free variation for a considerable length of time. It is therefore necessary to see whether or not such forms do subsquently become systematic.

3. The empirical evidence

Having assessed the weight of the theoretical arguments in support of free variation, we will now turn to the empirical evidence. Tarone (1988) reviews a number of studies and comes to the conclusion that they do not satisfactorily support the case for free variation, for the following reasons:

(i) they are cross-sectional and not longitudinal;

(ii) they attribute IL phenomena to random variation before exhausting the potential sources of systematic variability;

(iii) none of the studies was originally set up to investigate free variation.

3.1 Cross-section v. longitudinal

In a longitudinal study of a Laotian learner, Huebner (1979) reports that the subject seemed to use new forms to serve pre-existing functions, resulting in free variation. The main strength of Huebner's study is its duration, which enables him to see the extent to which forms enter into free variation before systematicity sets in. It satisfactorily meets one of Tarone's criticisms.

The study by Gatbonton (1975), cited in Ellis (1985b), does not provide incontestable evidence. If free variation is a transitional stage prior to systematicity, then it is essential to use a longitudinal design rather than generalise about stages of IL development, as Gatbonton does. In spite of her cross-sectional approach, she proceeds to posit two stages of IL development: the 'acquisition phase' and the 'replacement phase'.

Tarone is critical of another study (Wagner-Gough 1975), which reports that Homer, the research subject, used progressive and simple verb forms interchangeably to realise the same function. Tarone argues that Wagner-Gough does not investigate the effects of linguistic context, which has been shown to influence second language performance (Ellis 1988).

To summarise: the evidence provided in studies of free variation (with the exception of Huebner 1979) is contestable, since the 'stages' of IL development are based on generalisations from cross-sectional research.

3.2 Potential sources of variability

In the light of the possibility of the analyst erroneously describing variation as non-systematic, Ellis (1988) identifies five conditions that have to be met before variation can safely be described as random:

(i) the two forms in question occur in the same situational context;

(ii) they perform the same illocutionary function;

(iii) they occur in the same discourse context;

(iv) they occur in the same linguistic context;

(v) their manner of production provides no evidence of any difference in the amount of attention being paid to form.

These conditions provide a framework for determining the existence of free variation - a welcome development, since it attempts to preempt analysts who might otherwise overhastily describe as "random" variation which might turn out to be systematic when some, if not all, of the five factors are taken into account.

Ellis's proposal highlights the fact that claims about free variation can only be made once all potential sources of variability have been eliminated; if not, they will reflect not what is found in the data but rather the limitations of the analytical tools.[1]

3.3 Original research aim

Tarone's third criticism (Tarone 1988), that none of the studies were originally designed to study *free* variation, is more difficult to understand. It is true that the 75 empirical investigations she cites - reporting variation in phonology, morphology, syntax and pragmatics - had sought to identify various factors (e.g. linguistic context, attention to form, planning time) which might bring about *systematic* variability in IL performance. However, it seems logical that having set out to investigate systematicity and having exhausted the factors that might create it, one is then - and only then - entitled to conclude that any variation must be random; random variation is in this sense dependent, logically and methodologically, on systematic variation. Free variation exists, as it were, by default; it is shown to be present as the result of analysis that has demonstrated the absence of systematic variation.

However, even if the controversy about whether it is possible to investigate free variation has been resolved, it remains essential to decide at what stage of IL development the analysis should begin. For example, Schachter (1986) is not prepared to consider forms occurring before the onset of systematicity, while Ellis is clearly interested in forms occurring prior to that because it is exactly in such areas that free variation is likely to be found.

4 Conclusion

Theoretically, then, it appears that the existence of free variation accords with what is known about ILs, particularly their instability. Instability creates the conditions for free variation, while at the same time the violation - thorough redundancy - of basic principles of IL development limits its scope. Empirically, however, the case for free variation is not strengthened by the claims emanating from cross-sectional studies. What is needed are longitudinal studies - paradoxically, those seeking to investigate *systematic* variation, since free variation can only be established as a consequence of research into systematicity.

Note

More generally, the weakness of some of the evidence cited by Ellis (1985b) in support of free variation may be demonstrated by analysing data on such variability in his own production, e.g. his "haphazard alternation" between *who* and *that* in non-restrictive relative clauses (Ellis 1985b: 121). The evidence is unconvincing because it derives mainly from intuitive understanding of his own production (Preston 1989); it would have been more robust if he had tested the accuracy of those intuitions against empirical evidence. However, it is only fair to say that neither Ellis nor most of the studies he cites justify the existence of free variation solely on the basis of intuition; rather, such examples are intended to supplement some of the studies reviewed.

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC PRESENTATION

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Abstract

This paper first puts forward a number of reasons why postgraduate students need to be able to present bibliographic information in a form that satisfies academic conventions. Possible sources of information for the student are then enumerated; global principles of bibliographic presentation (completeness, clarity and convenenience, consistency, economy and care) are discussed; and existing provision for the explicit teaching of the conventions of bibliographic presentation within the DAL, Edinburgh is outlined. Subsequent sections describe a study to assess, by means of performance-sampling and questionnaire, the nature of student difficulties and the extent to which these are catered for by instruction, and present the provisional results of this study. Our study suggests that the construction of a correctly referenced bibliography is a much more complex operation than was previously assumed; that instruction does help; and that studies of pre-instruction and post-instruction performance are necessary as well as revealing.

1. Background

1.1 Is bibliographic presentation a problem?

The apparent lack of interest in the bibliography[1] on the part of researchers in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) might suggest that bibliographic presentation poses few problems. While detailed investigation has been carried out into other aspects of the genre of academic writing - title (Dudley Evans 1984), abstract (James 1984), introduction (Swales 1983; Jordan 1988), argument (Hyland 1990), citation (Dubois 1988) and discussion (McKinlay 1983; Hopkins and Dudley Evans 1988) - there has been no comparable work, as far as we are aware, on the content and form of the bibliography. In a recent UK-based survey of the writing difficulties of British and overseas students (Weir 1988), bibliographic presentation was not among the problem areas observed by academic staff; nor was it perceived as a problem by students.

On the other hand, the attention paid to bibliographies in EAP study skills materials shows that familiarisation with the construction of the bibliography is regarded as necessary by those working at the practical end of the applied linguistic spectrum. The following extracts from EAP courses illustrate respectively a focus on (a) form, (b) content and (c) form and content:

(a) References, at the end of an essay for example, are arranged in alphabetical order (a-z) of the author's surname or the name of the organisation. If more than one reference is given by the same author, then the earlier dated reference will appear first...

(Jordan 1990:123)

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(b) You *must* make a list of all the books that you have read or referred to in writing your essay. But don't list any you have not read!

(Wallace 1980:162-63, original emphasis)

(c) A bibliography is an alphabetical list of all sources a person has used. It is set out at the end of each piece of written work. **It must be in alphabetical order** and each entry must be laid out in a strictly ordered sequence...

A bibliography gives all the information a reader needs to find the source in a library. The information for each entry should always be presented in the same strict order. This order is used because the libraries in the academic world catalogue their books by filing the information about them in this same sequence. This means that everyone can find quickly and easily the books they are searching for, provided the writer of the paper writes his bibliography correctly.

(Smith and Smith 1988:172-3, original emphasis)

1.2 Functions of the bibliography

The authors of the third extract (from a study skills course for ESL undergraduates) make a number of assumptions. Apart from those of culture (a homogeneous 'academic world'), economics (the availability of books) and possibly sex (*his* bibliography), Smith and Smith imply that the purpose of a bibliography is to facilitate subsequent research. While this is true, it is certainly not the whole truth. Bibliographies have other functions, one of which is *to establish a writer's academic credentials* by indicating the breadth and/or depth of their acquaintance with the relevant literature. This is of course open to abuse: Extract 2 above exhorts EAP students not to exaggerate the extent of their reading by listing items they have not read.

Conversely, convention requires *open acknowledgment of sources*. The academic community - or at least this branch of it - expects writers not only not to claim to have read work that they have not seen, but also to admit having read all the items they have benefited from. The strength of the taboo on academic plagiarism varies from place to place and from time to time; at the time of writing, for example, the topic is receiving attention in the specialist and general press in Britain[2]. A further expectation is that the writer will have consulted primary sources wherever possible, rather than relying on secondary sources such as reviews and surveys.

Our own particular interest in the bibliography, for the purposes of this paper, relates to a sub-category of the role of references as credentials, namely the writer's ability to *demonstrate familiarity with academic norms*. This arises from our teaching on the course in Applied Linguistics at Edinburgh, for which students have to produce six written assignments (projects and dissertation) over a 12-month period. In this context, writers are primarily addressing a reader/assessor, rather than later researchers.

1.3 Reader/assessor's perceptions

One response to our earlier question 'is bibliographic presentation a problem?' is that it can be a reading problem as much as a writing problem. Faced with the omission of certain details - or, indeed, of whole items - from a list of references, the reader's reaction is likely to be one of dissatisfaction or even annoyance. Even superficial errors in the bibliography, as elsewhere, can have negative repercussions. As Brookes and Grundy (1990: 60) point out, 'a piece of writing that has not been proof-read will irritate readers, impede rapid understanding, and cause readers to think that the writer is less intelligent and educated than may be the case'.

In the specific case where the reader is engaged in the assessment of the text as part of an academic course, the repercussions may manifest themselves in the mark awarded - a point underlined recently in a report by the external examiner for the M.Sc. in Applied Linguistics.

1.4 Writer/teacher's responsibility

In addition to the short-term demands of the course, there is the longer-term issue of participants' future writing. Many of those graduating from the course will address wider audiences later in their careers through research theses, articles or books, so attention to referencing techniques during the M.Sc. course is likely to have a value in helping them to meet the demands of readers - including journal referees and publishers' readers - of their subsequent work. Moreover, some M.Sc. students will themselves go on to teach higher degree students, who will also require guidance in academic presentation skills.

1.5 Summary

We have argued that despite its neglect in applied linguistic research, the bibliography fulfils certain important functions in academic writing. Its principal roles are to facilitate subsequent research and to establish the credentials of the writer as a member of the academic community. This second role has a number of aspects, among them the acknowledgment of sources, and in the narrower context of a university course, the need to satisfy assessors' expectations about a student's control of the academic register. Beyond the confines of the course, competence in bibliographic presentation should also pay dividends in future work written for a wider readership and in the subsequent instruction of others.

2. Sources of help

Students seeking information about referencing conventions in their academic field are likely to have access to five potential sources of help. Firstly, there may be guidelines representing a consensus within a specialist field, such as the *MLA Stylesheet* or the 'Vancouver style' in biomedical publications[3].

Secondly, there are stylesheets produced by individual journals; those in the applied linguistics field range from the (very) brief information offered by *Applied Linguistics* to the fuller specification in the notes for contributors to *English Language Teaching Journal* and *TESOL Quarterly*.

Thirdly, there are locally produced guidelines. At Edinburgh, the Main Library offers a pamphlet entitled *Dissertation and Report Writing: Guidance Notes on the Use and Acknowledgment of Sources*, and some departments, such as the Centre for Tropical Veterinary Medicine, provide detailed handouts giving advice on writing course assignments, covering matters of overall organisation and linguistic style, as well as presentation.

Fourthly, there are published manuals written for first-language writers, which may give advice restricted to a specific academic discipline (e.g. Lock 1977 on writing for medical journals) or include some of the different conventions in a number of specialisms (e.g. Turabian 1973).

Finally, there are EAP-oriented materials, which offer similar information but in a more overtly didactic way: courses that focus specifically on the skills of academic writing (e.g. Hamp-Lyons and Courter 1984; Lynch 1989; Jordan 1990) and global study skills textbooks (e.g. Wallace 1980; Williams 1983; Smith and Smith 1988).

It is worth pointing out that no matter how 'general' such texts claim to be, they tend to reflect referencing conventions specific to one discipline or group of disciplines. None of the EAP courses cited above, for example, mentions the option of ordering references numerically in order of citation - accepted practice in a number of academic fields - rather than in alphabetical and chronological sequence.

As we have seen, there are various sources of assistance available to a student who takes a decision to *learn* about bibliographies; the alternative is to *acquire* familiarity with the conventions through natural exposure to the generic features of the reference lists encountered in books and articles read during the course. Neither is an easy option.

First, there is the fact that the would-be learner is presented with conflicting advice. We might take as an example the inclusion or omission of inclusive page numbers in a reference from a journal or edited collection. That information is regarded as essential by the writers of most of the sources cited above - and this was also the majority view of our DAL and IALS colleagues - but a substantial number of publications appear to allow writers to omit page numbers, particularly in the case of contributions to collections.

However, there are particular difficulties for the acquirer. Not the least of these is the sheer number of elements involved (see Table 3 in section 5.4) and the fact that some of those elements are in free variation, for example, the use of underlining versus italics when highlighting book and journal titles, or the ordering of publication details such as date, publisher and place of publication. There is the additional problem that not all naturally occurring data offer a good model. Even in the case of published articles, errors can slip through the editing process. Extract (1) comes from a journal article (dealing, ironically, with the process and product of academic writing) and contains at least 10 types of error:

(1)

Britton, J (1970) *Language and Learning* Penguin 1(2), 81-92
Brown, G and Yule, G (1983) *Discourse Analysis*, Cambridge University Press
Carrell, P (1983) 'Some issues in studying the role of schemata, or background knowledge in second language comprehension', *Reading in a Foreign Language*
Davies, F and T Greene, (1984) *Reading for Learning in the Sciences*, Oliver and Boyd
Davies, F (1985) 'Towards a classroom based methodology for studying information structures in texts for specific purposes', in J Ulijn & A.K. Pugh (Eds) *Reading for Professional Purposes Methods and Materials* ACCO Leuwen
Dudley Evans, T (1985) *Writing Laboratory Reports*, Nelson Wadsworth.
Dudley Evans, T 'Genre analysis an investigation of the introduction and discussion sections of M Sc dissertations ' in M Coulthard (Ed) (1986) *Talking About Text* Discourse Analysis Monograph no 13, English Language Research, University of Birmingham
Entwistle, N and P Marsden, (1983) *Understanding Student Learning*, Croom Helm
Fries, P (1983) 'On the status of theme in English arguments from discourse', in P S Petofi and Sozer (Eds), *Micro and Macro Connexity of Texts*, Helmut Buske Verlag

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In the case of journal articles, it is not possible to judge whether bibliographic errors are those of the original writer, of the accredited editor of the collection, or of the publisher's desk editor. But whatever the source, the effect is that a student's search for models of academic practice becomes more frustrating.

3. Basic principles: the five Cs[5]

Despite the surface differences in the various sources of information, it is possible to discern five or six underlying guiding principles: (1) completeness (2) clarity and convenience - all of which we regard as *essential*; (3) consistency (4) eConomy and (5) care, which in our view are *desirable* characteristics. The principles are discussed briefly below and elaborated in the form of a categorial system in section 5.

3.1 Completeness

One of the functions of a bibliographic entry, as we indicated in section 1, is to enable the reader to look up or obtain the item referred to with - it should go without saying - the least inconvenience. Completeness, in other words, is a form of academic good manners. At the level of the whole work, there should be a bibliographic entry for all items referred to in the body of the text. Individual entries should also be complete in themselves. For references to books, this will necessitate the provision of such details as the name of the author or authors, the date of publication, publisher, and so on; for journal articles, the entry should include the volume number, issue number and page numbers; and for a paper in an edited collection, the names of the editors, the date of publication (since this may be different from the year in which the paper was first published), the title of the collection and the relevant page numbers. The details mentioned here, it should be emphasised, are merely illustrative - for reasons of space; examples of full references are given in the bibliography that concludes this paper.

3.2 Clarity and convenience

The reader's convenience will also be affected by the way in which the bibliography and its individual entries are organised and presented.

For the reader who wishes to access a bibliography independently of the preceding text, an alphabetical ordering by authors' surnames will make it easier to locate particular entries quickly. If there are two or more entries relating to the same author, convention dictates that these should be chronologically ordered (earlier before later) and that jointly authored works should follow single author entries.

Within entries, various ordering possibilities exist. Our own preference is to highlight certain details by placing:

- the date immediately after the author's name (rather than at the end of the entry)
- the publisher after the place of publication
- any page references at the end of the entry.

Again, we have the reader's needs in mind: the date is one means by which items are frequently remembered and referred to; the publisher is normally a more significant piece of information than the place of publication since a publisher's catalogue is one access-route for the would-be purchaser or bookseller seeking further details; and for the person who is looking up the item in a journal or collection, the page reference is also a key piece of information.

Presentation is also important. Spacing between entries and indenting all run-on information make it easier for the reader to find an individual entry, as well as being easier on the eye. Highlighting of book and journal titles and punctuation, or lack of it, also have a part to play; the examples below indicate the potential for confusion when highlighting and/or punctuation marks have been omitted:

(2) ... in Smith, A.G. (ed.) Communication and Culture Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York 1966 pp 505-16

(3) Haugen, E. (1966) Dialect, Language, Nation In Pride, J.B. & Janet Holmes (eds) (1972) Sociolinguistics .....

3.3 Consistency

At one level, consistency is a relatively trivial matter: whether a comma or colon is used between place of publication and publisher will not normally pose a problem for the reader, although such details may irritate the more pedantic of reader-assessors; at another level, however, consistency can have a bearing on clarity, as when the distinction between titles of books and papers is not carefully observed, as in the case of these further entries from the bibliography used in example (1):

(4)

McCarthy, M (1984) 'A new look at vocabulary in EFL', *Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 5, No 1 (pp 12 22)
McCarthy, M (in press) Some vocabulary patterns in conversation. To appear in Carter, R. and McCarthy, M J (Eds) *Vocabulary in Language Teaching and Learning*, Longman.
Rumelhart, David E (1984) *Understanding understanding*, In Flood J (Ed) op. cit.
Swales, J (1981) *Aspects of Article Introductions* Research Report No 1 University of Aston, Language Studies Unit

3.4 Economy

Unlike the principles previously discussed, that of economy is of concern to publishers and should also be a concern to writers. Basically, this principle operates in conjunction with that of completeness. It says: *Give all the information that is necessary but no more than this*. Economy dictates, for instance, that where two or more items in a bibliography refer to the same edited collection, then the collection will be given a separate entry and the references to it can be correspondingly abbreviated as shown below:

(5) ... in Richards (ed.) 1978: 179-203

Similarly, there seems little value in giving anything more than the initial of an author's first name, unless a second initial serves to distinguish between otherwise identical entries in the same bibliography. Following the same principle, we do not ourselves use *pp*, since in appropriately punctuated entries (6), there can be no confusion, nor do we include what we consider to be irrelevant features of the publisher's name such as Ltd or Inc. We do, however, give the city of publication (as well as the state, county or country if appropriate), since we feel that this can be important for the reader or bookseller trying to trace an item (7).

(6) … ELTJ 42/1: 23-29

(7) … Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall

3.5 Care

The principle of care comprises at least three elements: factual accuracy, spelling of proper names, and attention to all the other principles mentioned above.

Factual accuracy - in dates, titles, page references and so on - is important because inaccuracies may make it difficult for others to find the item referred to but also because in cases where primary sources are not available an error in one bibliography can result in the same error in a succession of bibliographies.

The same point might be made in relation to the misspelling of proper names where these are unfamiliar; where misspellings are obvious and numerous, they are likely to affect the reader's judgement of the writer. In particular, students of applied linguistics who produce aberrant spellings of 'linguistics' or who fail to spell their author-lecturers' names correctly may well come in for caustic comment.

3.6 Summary

For the student writer, the five Cs might serve as guiding principles; for the reader-assessor, they might be seen as criteria for evaluation. Whether as principles or criteria, they are clearly not watertight, but in practical terms this is immaterial. The writer who gives due attention to all of the principles discussed in this section will produce a bibliography which not only fulfils its primary functions of acknowledging sources and guiding the interested reader but also provides a suitable model for other writers of bibliographies.

4. Workshop, input materials and optional essay (1987-90)

The decision to offer M.Sc. students practical help in the presentation aspects of academic writing in general and referencing conventions in particular resulted, as we have indicated above, from an awareness that some form of fairly explicit guidance was needed.

We chose to provide this guidance in three modes: through specially-written materials which incorporated advice and practical tasks; through an optional workshop session (of 90-120 minutes); and through feedback on an optional essay. The first section of the materials was handed out in advance of the workshop with the request that students work through it; the second section was handed out in the course of the workshop. Details of the essay, which was intended to provide practice in applying the principles presented through the materials and workshop, were given at the end of the workshop.

The following points were included in the written materials:

- general guidelines for academic writing (organisation, language, presentation)
- the contents page
- paraphrase, summary, quotation and plagiarism
- bibliographic presentation
- proofreading
- using a word-processor

We planned and taught the workshop together. From the beginning it was seen, like the practice essay, as an optional supplement to the materials, an opportunity for those students, first- and second-language speakers of English, who felt unsure about the presentation of written work to gain a clear understanding of what would be expected of them when they submitted their first piece of assessable work. When we planned the first workshop we had no idea how many students would avail themselves of this opportunity; in fact, the majority have tended to do so, perhaps fearing that they might miss something really important if they absented themselves.

The workshop supplements the materials in four ways. Discussion of students' answers to the tasks enables us to raise awareness of the principles discussed in Section 3; we highlight points which in our experience need to be stressed; we add a number of relatively minor points not dealt with in the materials (such as the use of *op.cit.*, *ibid.* and other in-text referencing conventions); and we encourage students to ask questions. It is on the basis of this last function that the workshop can perhaps be most easily justified. A good set of instructional materials will tell students what the tutor thinks they need to know, but will not necessarily cover all the points about which students feel doubtful (as our study has once again illustrated).

Over the years, we have made a number of minor modifications to the materials and workshop. The first version (1987) contained neither general guidelines on academic writing nor suggestions concerning the use of a word processor. Changes in later versions have been largely dictated by methodological considerations: for instance, to free more time for discussion during the workshop we felt it desirable to cut out certain tasks; others were transferred to the first set of materials, which students were asked to prepare in advance. We have also benefited from student questions in that we are now better able to anticipate some of the points that need to be made.

All these changes, we should emphasise, were the result of our own intuitions; such informal student feedback as we received had been reasonably positive and we had made no attempt to seek feedback by formal means. However, as we read through student assignments last year, checking bibliographies as a routine part of assessment, it occurred to us that although individuals were clearly not producing work that conformed in every particular to the academic conventions we had presented, we had no overall view of students' competence or the extent to which they had benefited collectively or individually from our efforts. We make a point of evaluating the full-length courses for which we are responsible; the time had come, we decided, to assess the effectiveness of our teaching procedures and materials in respect of this mini-component of the M.Sc. programme.

5. The study (1990-91)

5.1 Aims

Our study, carried out with the 1990-91 M.Sc. group, had the following aims:

(1) to investigate the range and nature of students' familiarity with bibliographic conventions on entry into the course;
(2) to identify and, if possible, to explain the most common errors of commission and omission in relation to these conventions following treatment;
(3) to look for differences in individuals' learning and to suggest possible causes of such differences (e.g. previous postgraduate course experience, previous English-medium instruction, native knowledge of English, attendance at the workshop and use of the handout materials);
(4) in the light of (3), to gauge the general effectiveness of the components of the academic writing package (materials, workshop and optional essay) in enabling students to cope with referencing in their first course project, and to establish the need for adjustments or additions to our materials and method.

5.2 Method

It had been our intention to collect data on students' performances at four stages: (i) a pre-workshop test involving the identification and correction of errors in a bibliography (see Appendix A); (ii) a post-workshop test identical to the first test; (iii) the optional essay; (iv) their first course assignment. The first three sets of data were to be collected in November 1990 and the last in February 1991.

In the event, only three students did the optional essay; that data has therefore been excluded from the study. We have also disregarded the post-test data produced by students in November for reasons of non-comparability: firstly, not all the students who came to the workshop stayed to do the test; secondly, of those who did complete the test, some referred to the handout materials in answering the questions and others believed they were not allowed to. Our analysis therefore focuses on results from the pre-test and the students' own bibliography for their first project.

In addition to the performance data, we administered two simple questionnaires in February 1991. One asked the students, among other things, what use they had made of the November materials in writing their project and whether there were any points which they had needed to refer to but were not included in the handout. The other went to DAL and IALS staff involved in M.Sc. project assessment, eliciting their attitudes to bibliographic presentation in general and to the relative importance of the specific points covered in our materials.

5.3 Materials

Pre-test

Our pre-test was designed to measure students' ability to detect some common errors we had observed in previous M.Sc assignments. They were asked to correct the errors they noticed and to indicate where details were missing. It contained a total of 33 instances of error, in 22 separate categories, as shown below.

Table 1. Error categories featured in the pre-test

	categories	instances
	ordering	
1.	alphabetical	1
	consistency/clarity	
2.	distinction between books and articles	2
3.	highlighting of book title	3
4.	highlighting of journal title	1
5.	author: name or initial	2
6.	order of publication details	1
7.	order of editor's/editors' initials and surnames	1
	completeness	
8.	title of article in collection	1
9.	date of publication (main item)	1
10.	date of publication (collection)	1
11.	page numbers (item in journal/collection)	3
12.	both/all (co)authors' names	1
13.	author's initial	2
14.	initial after surname	1
15.	editorship acknowledged	1
16.	publisher (book)	1
17.	place of publication (book)	1
18.	volume number (journal)	1
19.	issue number (journal)	1
	other	
20.	spelling (of proper names)	3
21.	inappropriate inclusion of specific page numbers	1
22.	punctuation (consistency/clarity)	3
	Total	33

In marking students' pre-tests we chose to score their performance in terms of categories of error (i.e. out of 22). The alternative method - counting each instance or error identified - has the disadvantage that two students might achieve the same numerical score but with a different range of error awareness.

Project bibliography

The materials for comparison with the students' pre-test scripts were the bibligraphies they produced for their first project, handed in during February 1991. Their performance was scored in two ways: a mark indicating the percentage of fully correct categories corresponding to those featured in the pre-test, and an overall score of their performance on all categories, including those not featured in the pre-test (see Table 3 for a complete list of categories).

5.4 Results

In section 5.1 we stated the aims of our study. We now consider each of the points in turn, beginning with a comparison of students' demonstrated knowledge of bibliographic conventions on entry to the course and after treatment.

Table 2 Scores on pre-test (1) and project bibliographies (2a, 2b), as percentages

student	(1) pre-test % score	(2a) % score on pre-test categories	(2b) % score on all categories
1.	41	81	70
2.	55	59	63
3.	55	77	79
4.	27	85	93
5.	18	74	67
6.	45	80	89
7.	23	78	73
8.	41	74	81
9.	45	91	93
10.	55	90	89
11.	23	89	88
12.	27	62	67
13.	14	81	78
14.	27	88	86
15.	64	83	86
16.	5	92	94
17.	45	52	62
18.	32	94	96
19.	59	86	89
20.	32	75	77
21.	45	54	72
22.	68	100	100
23.	18	78	79
24.	41	93	87
25.	18	85	81
26.	14	77	78
27.	86	67	75
28.	45	83	86
29.	36	81	81
30.	27	81	77
31.	36	48	52
32.	14	72	71
33.	64	72	71
34.	18	82	87
mean	37	78	80

It is worth stressing that it is not possible to make a direct comparison of scores in column 1 on the one hand and columns 2a and 2b on the other, since not all the students' bibliographies contained the categories featured in the pre-test.

Nevertheless, the overall picture that emerges from these results is an (expected) increase in performance from pre-test to project, even though the latter was based on productive performance. Only one student (number 27) achieved lower percentage scores in his project bibliography than on the pre-test; all other students showed an improvement, averaging some forty percentage points, and one student (number 16) moved from 5% (i.e. a single category correct) on the November test to a project bibliography score of 92/94%.

In general terms, then, the group demonstrated that they had achieved markedly more ease and familiarity with bibliographic conventions between November and February.

The fact that the mean score on overall performance in the project bibliography was slightly - though not significantly - higher than the score for the features dealt with in the pre-test suggests that the students had been sensitised through the notes and the workshop to the need to pay attention to points *beyond* those featured in the test (see Table 3).

Table 3. Analysis of errors in project bibliographies, by category

ordering of references within list	
• alphabetical	0
• chronological	
- earlier before later	2
- distinction between items published in same year	3
• single-author before joint-author items	2
consistency/clarity	
• distinction between book and article titles	4
• highlighting of title	
- book	6
- journal	6
• author: full name or initial	6
• ordering of publication details	4
completeness	
• title of item in collection	0
• date of publication	
- main item	3
- collection in which main item appears	13
• page numbers: journal or collection	14
• all authors' names	5
• author's initial	
- inclusion	1
- after surname	0
• edited collection	
- editor's/editors' name(s)	4
- editor's/editors' initial(s)	4
- ed(s) indicated as such	4
- sep. entry for collection ref'd to more than once	6
• publisher	5
• journal	
- volume number	1
- issue number	11
• place of publication	19
• inadequately referenced lecture series	1
other	
• spelling	15
• punctuation/layout	
- separation of items (indentation/spacing)	2
- clarity	N/A
- consistency	N/A
- place of brackets (around eds/date)	3
• inappropriateness	
- abbreviations	1
- underlining	1
- reference to specific page cited in quotation	1
- reference to secondary source	1
- *vide supra* or *op.cit.* (within bibliography)	2

[numbers on right indicate students producing that error; n=34]

A tabulation of this kind has certain limitations. For instance, it cannot reveal the degree of consistency of error within an individual student's work. Nor - without further calulations - can it indicate the relation between erroneous and error-free performance on each category across the corpus.

What does emerge from the table is that the project bibliographies contained well over thirty distinct categories of error, and that although some of these were clearly idiosyncratic (e.g. the use of *vide supra* to refer to another entry in the bibliography), other error-types were sufficiently widespread as to merit further investigation. Here, for reasons of space, we focus on just four of these:

- *place of publication:* this was omitted in some cases where the publisher was a university press; in other cases, only the country, county or state was given (e.g. Great Britain, Suffolk, New Jersey) rather than the city plus, where relevant, the more general location

- *page numbers:* these were omitted for both journal articles and items in collections; two students consistently gave page references for journal articles but not for items in collections

- *date of publication of item in collection*: this was a wholly consistent omission in all cases

- *inconsistent use of authors' initials and full names*: this might be attributed to any of a number of possible causes, e.g. the assumption that the full name is appropriate for a sole author but not for joint authors; the (blind) copying of the full name from the original source; the belief that any name after the first, as in the case of joint authors or editors, may be given in full.

As these few examples illustrate, a more finely-grained analysis - and probably reference to our informants - will be necessary if we are to establish the nature and extent of any rule-based behaviour.

We would like now to summarise our findings on the second issue mentioned in our aims, namely, the possible influences on differential rates and extent of improvement demonstrated in the pre-test and project performances. In section 4 we mentioned three potential factors affecting students' competence on entry and after treatment: first-language use of English; previous experience of an English-medium postgraduate course; experience of the November workshop. The results of our analysis are provisional but, we think, suggestive.

Table 4 Mean scores (in rounded percentages), overall and by variable

	Pre-test (pre-test	Project (overall) categories)	Project
overall mean (n=34)	37	78	80
L1 English user (n=15)	36	76	78
L2 English user (n=19)	38	80	82
+ previous postgraduate experience (n=13)	43	76	79
- previous postgraduate experience (n=21)	32	79	81
+ workshop (n=29)	34	83	82
- workshop (n=5)	53	59	68

The first point to note is the lack of any measurable effect of the L1/L2 difference; the L1 users in fact scored lower on average than their L2 counterparts, though not significantly so. In the case of the possible positive effect of previous postgraduate experience in English medium, any initial advantage of such a background ($t=1.55$, but significant only at the 0.2 level) had disappeared by the time of the project.

It is when we consider the performance of students who did, or did not, attend the November workshop that we find the strongest statistical effect - although the small number of the non-attenders (n=5) means we have to interpret the figures with caution. The students who did not come to the workshop began with higher mean scores on the pre-test, 53% compared with 34%; comparison between the two groups' means gives a value of $t=2.05$, significant at the .05 level. So, as a group, the five students who did not attend the workshop were significantly more proficient in recognising bibliographical errors than those who chose to attend the workshop. (One possibility is that it was a feeling of relative satisfaction with their pre-test performance - although the results were not made available to the students - that led some of the five to decide not to attend the workshop.

However, by the time the project was handed in, the attenders achieved sharply better performances in their own bibliographies (83% and 82% on pre-test categories and overall) than did the non-attenders (59% and 68%). The t-tests for these results give values of $t=4.24$, significant at the .001 level, for the pre-test category score (column 2) and $t=2.57$, significant at the .01 level, for the overall project bibliography score (column 3).

A matched t-test was used to compare the students' performances horizontally, i.e. from pre-test to project; non-attenders' mean increase from 53% to 59% does not reach significance at the customary .05 level ($t = -1.71$, significant at .2 only). On the other hand, the dramatic improvement, from 34% to 83%, in the scores of students attending the workshop is - as one might expect at first glance - a statistically robust one ($t = -13.84$, significant at the .001 level).

5.5 Discussion

It is tempting to conclude that it was exposure to the information provided at our workshop that resulted in the dramatic improvement in the mean scores of those who attended the session, but of course we are dealing here with statistical correlations and not (necessarily) with a causal link. Even if the non-attenders had been a large enough group to allow us to be more confident about the statistics, it is unlikely that the connection between attendance and success is a straightforward one.

For one thing, the distinction between attenders and non-attenders is not absolute: even those who were not at the workshop had access to the session handouts; conversely, judging by their questionnaire responses, not all students who attended the workshop referred back to the materials when writing up their project. The possible relationship between access to (and active use of) the materials is something we intend to investigate further.

Another reason for caution in interpreting the data is the lack of direct comparability between the pre-test, which involved *receptive* identification of errors, and the project, which required students to *produce* their own bibliographies.

If non-attendance really is a contributory factor in relative lack of success on our measures, one possible interpretation is that non-attendance at the workshop reflects an individual's mental set towards this particular aspect of academic culture - a relative lack of concern with the details of written presentation, or a perception that content matters more than form - which is not susceptible to change over the short period between workshop and project. If this conjecture is not too wide of the mark, it may nevertheless be that in the longer term such an attitude will change, particularly if shortcomings in a student's first project bibliography are brought to the writer's attention.

One of the areas we intend to pursue is the issue of the *relative priority* for the reader (and therefore for the writer) of specific bibliographic features. The questionnaire completed by staff in DAL and IALS yielded information that is of potential benefit both to M.Sc. students, in knowing which points to check over with particular care, and also to ourselves, in redesigning future materials on bibliographic presentation.

In a preliminary analysis of 11 colleagues' responses, we have identified a baker's dozen of points, all of which were judged to be important by nine or more respondents. These are shown in Table 4, together with the mean percentage scores achieved on those points in the pre-test (in receptive mode) and in the project (productive mode).

Table 5. Important bibliographic features (staff consensus)

		pre-test mean %	project mean %
a.	alphabetical ordering of items	8	100
b.	title of article in collection	50	100
c.	author's initial	25	97
d.	volume number (journal)	56	94
e.	date of publication (book)	75	91
f.	distinction between book and article titles	15	86
g.	editor's name (collection)	25	85
h.	publisher's name (book)	36	84
i.	editor's initial	-	83
j.	distinction betw items by author in same year	-	67
k.	spelling	72	42
l.	date of collection where cited item appears	17	41
m.	issue number (journal)	31	35

The data in this table suggests that on the first nine of these priority items (a-i) students had achieved a reasonable degree of mastery (80% or more). However, in the case of spelling, percentage scores were lower in the project than in the pre-test. We believe this is explained by the different modes of performance - receptive and productive: it may well be easier to recognise someone else's spelling errors than one's own. Items j, l and m, though, suggest that we should do more in future to ensure that students are made aware of the need to provide the required information on those points.

6. Conclusions

Although we would again stress that this is a working paper on an ongoing study, we feel able to draw certain provisional conclusions. The first is that the now-attested low level of familiarity with bibliographic conventions on entry to the course justifies the provision of instruction in some form.

The second relates to the statistical link between non-attendance at the academic writing workshop and significantly weaker performance on the project bibliography. As we have suggested, there is unlikely to be a direct causal link between the two. Whatever the nature of the relationship, our inclination is not to make the workshop compulsory but rather to do more to make the handout materials self-standing and less dependent on clarification and expansion at the workshop.

Thirdly, the 1990 pre-test brought to our attention a number of points which had not been dealt with in the handouts and which we were able to mention in the course of the workshop. It is clear from the project results that some of those points were not retained by all the students who attended - and of course were unavailable to students who did not. For a future year, these points would need to be included in the handout materials.

Fourthly, certain errors are consistent within (and to a degree across) individual performances and suggest that the writer is operating what we might call an 'interlanguage' rule. Examples include the omission of journal issue numbers, or the inclusion of place of publication for journals. It seems likely that errors of this sort stem from unawareness rather than a belief that the details are insignificant; whatever the reason, such points also need to be included in future guidance notes.[6]

Fifthly, the handouts deliberately included a great many examples of references, on the assumption that students would be able to infer certain rules from them. That this did not always happen - as manifested by the project results - may have been because students did not use the examples in this way (a limitation of the 'acquisition' route) or because the relevant data was not available in the samples supplied. This would seem to be the case, for example, with the need to be specific about place of publication and to include editors' initials in a full reference.

There would seem to be two basic options as to the nature of the guidance notes. At their simplest, they might comprise a list of model references, perhaps categorised according to the nature of the item: e.g. *Books, Journal articles, Item in collection*. However, our preference is for a set of notes which (a) *explains* why bibliographic presentation is important (b) *enumerates* the principles underlying good bibliographies and (c) *exemplifies* these principles through a list of references categorised and roughly graded for complexity. This will be one of our tasks for 1991-2.

We think that the workshop itself should be offered at a time when students are most likely to perceive its value, i.e. a week or so before the hand-in date for their first assessed piece of work. We plan to supply no tasks, but to respond to students' questions concerning the (new-style) handout and the specific references they wish to include in their bibliographies. It should be interesting to see how results compare.

Two final thoughts. The first is specific to the academic issue we chose to investigate. Although one might assume that bibliographic presentation represents a relatively restricted repertoire, we have been struck by the sheer complexity of the rules (both positive and negative) with which the competent writer needs to operate. Bibliographic presentation is a problem.

The second thought is a general one. This study has underlined for us the need for teachers to assess, from time to time, the nature of students' problems at both initial and intermediate points in a course, and the degree to which teaching/input helps to solve those difficulties. As a result of this study, we should be able to do more to help next time round.

Notes

1. Throughout this discussion we use the term 'bibliography' as an alternative to '(list of) references', rather than in the sense of 'guide to reading'.

2. At the time of writing, the issue of plagiarism has been featured in recent articles in 'New Scientist' (9.2.91 and 23.2.91) and 'The Observer' (3.3.91). For a cross-cultural perspective on the topic, see Brookes and Grundy (1990), chapter 2.

3. The 'Vancouver style' is the informal term for the 'Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals', which resulted from a meeting of journal editors in Vancouver in 1978. These guidelines include bibliographic formats used by the US National Library of Medicine and have since been revised; the most recent edition is reprinted in the British Medical Journal of 9.2.91.

4. The bibliography is from Davies (1988).

5. This heading owes something to D. Brown's (1980) 'Eight Cs and a G'. Guidelines for Vocabulary Teaching. RELC Journal Supplement No.3. Singapore, RELC: 1-17.

6. Our colleague Hugh Trappes-Lomax has commented that our use of *error* and *interlanguage* implies deviation from a single, standard variety - a point we accept. Any guidance material should also draw students' attention to the degree of permissible variation (different 'dialects' and 'styles' of bibliography, e.g. depending whether or not one is writing for publication). On a related issue, see Owusu-Ansah (this volume).

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Appendix

name ....

A fellow-student on the M.Sc. has just completed an assignment and has asked you to check through their draft bibliography, an extract from which is reproduced below.

1. If you feel something is WRONG, correct it.
2. If you feel that something has been OMITTED, indicate what needs to be added.

* * *

Ferguson, C.A. (1959) in P.P. Gigioli: Language and Social Context
London: Penguuin

Haugen, E. (1966) Dialect, Language, Nation In Pride, J.B. & Janet Holmes
(eds) (1972) Sociolinguistics. Baltimore, USA. Penguin Books
Limited

Lynch, Tony. (1988) *Speaking up or talking down*. English Language Teaching
Journal

R.A. Hudson. Sociolinguistics. C.U.P. Cambridge 55

Richard et al (1985) *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics*

* * *

IMcG/TL

CROSSLINGUISTIC INFLUENCE IN A BILINGUAL CLASSROOM: THE EXAMPLE OF MALTESE AND ENGLISH

Antoinette Camilleri (DAL)

Abstract

Maltese and English are used as media of instruction across the curriculum in Maltese schools. It has been observed that both languages are normally used within any one lesson and, as is here illustrated by a continuum of crosslinguistic influence, they are mixed in complex ways. As within Maltese society at large, a new variety called Mixed Maltese English has emerged and is being used as a medium of instruction. This presents language teachers and language planners with a number of problems, some of which are identified at the end of the article.

1. Bilingualism in Malta

Maltese is the national language of the Republic of Malta and is used for official and administrative purposes on the islands, at the Law Courts, in church services and other religious celebrations, and in national and cultural activities. It is the mother-tongue of the majority of the population and for these people it also serves the functions of communication within the family, circles of friends and other social activities.

English shares an official status together with Maltese and is used for educational purposes, for business and other written correspondence, for international communication and it also serves a very important function in a major local industry - that of tourism. For a few people it is their first language, while for others it shares equal native language status with Maltese, as some families use both languages at home.

Thus, Maltese and English come together within the Maltese speech community at two levels:

(i) at the level of the bilingual individual who learns and uses both languages from childhood;

(ii) at the societal level each language is used for different purposes - although sometimes there is an overlap when both are used in the same situations, as in the classroom.

The variety of English spoken in Malta has been described by Broughton (1976) as Maltese English and is set forth by him as a realistic goal to aim for in the teaching of English in Malta. However, Borg (1980) notes that when Maltese speakers interact in English, sometimes their utterances contain both Maltese English and Maltese words and phrases. In the Maltese bilingual context there is frequent interchange in the use of Maltese and English and the two languages seem to converge to form what has been termed Mixed Maltese English (Borg, 1980).

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From a linguistic point of view, Mixed Maltese English cannot be considered a homogeneous and discrete variety; rather, it is realized by a continuum of speech styles, characterized at one end by a minimum of interference from Maltese and at the other end by an ever increasing influence of the mother-tongue (Borg, 1980, 1988).

Although this variation in language use within Maltese society has been observed (mostly in informal gatherings and also in semi-formal situations such as discussions on the local radio), these new varieties have not yet been described. Language use in the classroom has not been investigated either. For these reasons, the work of which this paper is a fragment tries to answer the questions as to (1) whether, and (2) in what ways Maltese and English operate as media of instruction in Maltese classrooms.

2. The Maltese bilingual classroom

There is no written policy or statement about the use of any language as medium of instruction within the Maltese educational system. For everyday written work, the language of the textbook and of the examination is used. For example, the textbooks and examination papers for Maltese, Religion, Social Studies and Maltese History are in Maltese, while for all the other subjects English is used (except for the teaching of other foreign languages where the language taught is emphasized as medium).

In a preliminary attempt to gather data from the classrooms themselves about the use of two languages as media of instruction, a number of lessons across levels, schools and subjects were observed and tape/video recorded.

From this data it appears that both Maltese and English are generally used within any one lesson. For example, in those subjects where written work is done in Maltese, sometimes both teachers and pupils resort to English in spoken language to express a feeling or to explain an idea. During one observed social studies lesson in Maltese, about the Maltese natural environment, two poems in English, relevant to the topic, were read out and explained. During the other lessons where English is the written medium, spoken interaction both between teacher and class, and among pupils themselves in group work, is commonly carried out in Maltese.

On closer inspection of the lesson transcripts, a more complex picture of the use of the two languages emerges. It seems that the frequent interchange in the use of Maltese and English in the classroom, as within Maltese society at large, has brought about the widespread use of a Mixed Maltese English variety. As I shall try to illustrate with a continuum of crosslinguistic influence, based on lesson transcript data, the situation cannot be merely described in terms of borrowing and code-switching because within any one utterance Maltese bilingual speakers make use of a range of different elements from both languages at the same time (see lesson transcript below as an example).

3. Crosslinguistic influence

Kellerman and Sharwood Smith (1986) introduce the term *crosslinguistic influence* to describe the interplay between earlier and later acquired languages. It is a neutral term which subsumes under one heading such phenomena as transfer, interference, avoidance, borrowing and language loss. In fact, the term could be extended to include the whole range of phenomena resulting from language contact, from interlanguages at the level of the individual at one end of the scale, to the formation of pidgins and creoles at the societal level at the other end.

I prefer to use the term *crosslinguistic influence* as a general term to explain the phenomena observable within the Maltese bilingual classroom (and possibly extend it to similar phenomena observable within the societal context) for the following reasons:

(a) It is a more neutral term than *borrowing* and *code-switching*. As Cassano (1977:150) points out, the choice of the term borrowing is not a very happy one since in language interchange, borrowing (and lending?) have very little in common with the commercial acts of which they are metaphorical extensions. It is language speakers and not languages that "borrow" terms from another language; the language from which the "borrowing" has taken place loses nothing; and the "borrowing" language does not return the "borrowed items"!

(b) Secondly, most definitions of borrowing (e.g. Hudson 1980:58; Mackey 1968:569; Haugen 1972:81) assume that it is one language which influences another. According to the Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, *borrowing* refers to 'a word or phrase which has been taken from one language and used in another language'(Richards, J. et al. 1985).

However, when languages come in contact at the societal level, the influence is not one-sided, since both of them influence the other. For example, Py (1986) gives examples of language attrition in the native language of Spanish migrant workers in Switzerland as a result of their learning and interacting in a second language. Rouchdy (1978) describes an immigrant Arabic community in the United States of America and reports that she observed interferences, or crosslinguistic influence, not only from English (in Bloomfield's (1933) sense majority/dominant) to Arabic (minority/subordinate), but also from Arabic to English although to a smaller degree.

In fact, although both languages influence each other, their effect is not necessarily balanced or symmetrical. Burling (1970:169) explains that this is so because two languages rarely meet on equal terms, due to the relative social positions of the speakers of each language, or the attitudes of the community towards each language. For these reasons the two languages can be expected to undergo a different type of influence.

From the Maltese data it appears that, for example, the influence of Maltese on English is very strong at the phonological level, while the influence of English on Maltese takes place more commonly at the lexical level (see Figure 1). These inferences require further analyses and investigation into possible explanations.

(c) Mackey (1968: 569) distinguishes between *interference*, i.e. the use of features belonging to one language while speaking or writing in another, and *borrowing*, when features of one language are used as if they were part of the other and are used by monolingual speakers who may know nothing of the language from which such features originated. In the Maltese context this criterion does not hold very well because all Maltese speakers could be described as bilingual to varying degrees, and therefore the criterion of use of items by monolinguals as a definition of borrowing does not apply.

In order to distinguish between the wholly and partially assimilated items in Haugen's (1956) terms, I have used the criterion of orthography. Thus, words that originated from English and which are now written using Maltese orthography are considered to be wholly assimilated, while those items for which English orthography is still used are considered to be only partially assimilated.

(d) Other attempts have been made by various linguists to provide definitions of *interference*, *mixed-speech*, and *borrowing* in order to differentiate between them (e.g. Ure, 1974: 222; Hudson, 1980: 58). However, in the speech of bilingual, at least when they interact amongst themselves, these phenomena could be seen as occurring on a continuum and a clear demarcation between them is not always possible. As can be observed from the Maltese English data, crosslinguistic influence is a more complex phenomenon than the simple "borrowing" of items from one language to another or of switching from one code to another.

4. Continuum of crosslinguistic influence

Figure 1 represents the continuum of crosslinguistic influence between Maltese and English, which we will be illustrating in this section; it ranges from small scale borrowing of lexical items from English at one end, through different examples of code-switching, to Maltese influence on spoken English at the other.

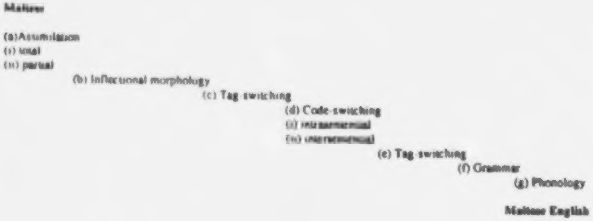

Fig.1 Continuum of Maltese/English crosslinguistic influence

The grading of types of crosslinguistic influence is not so neatly staged in real language use (as can be seen from the extract below). The aim of the scale is to provide a general picture of crosslinguistic influence occurring between Maltese and English, as observed in a sample of classroom discourse.

The following is an extract from a home-economics lesson transcript[1] in which most of the different categories identified in Figure 1 are found. It is quite a typical extract (although at this stage statistics are not available), and it gives an idea of Mixed Maltese English. The letters in bold within brackets at the end of some utterances refer to the categories in Figure 1.

T: it shrinks - ok igifieri - jew drapp li jixtorob - meta nghidu it shrinks right - hm - is - not washed - or else material which is - hm - delicate jew inkella jigrilu **(d,I)** - xi haga fil-machine perezempju bhal - l-isuede - right **(e)** suede **(a,II)** jekk you know what suede is eh I showed you a picture of it - suede jekk nahsluh jibda jittebba - allura that we don't wash **(d,I)** - ikollok - ikollkom - fuq il-care label - hm - marka bhal din - right **(e)** - now - this is for washing ++ *(writes on B/B)* ++ issa - imbaghad there are these two symbols ++ voldieri + there are these two symbols + ghandkom ideja ghal x'hiex inhuma dawn is-symbols - ghalfejn? **(d,II)**

Ps: bleach

T: very good - bleach - one of them - right - one of them - we can bleach (g) ++ *(writes on B/B)* ++ and this one ++ we do not bleach ++ *(writes on B/B)* ++ now - what types of material can we bleach? (g)

P: cotton

T: cotton + Marica

P: ga nsejt

T: ga nsejt int + hm ovvjament - ipprova ahseb pero + ipprova ahseb + x'tipi - illi perezempju - libsa bhal tieghi din nista' nibblicjaha? (b)

P: le

T: le ghal x'hiex?

P: ghax tmur il-kulur

T: ghax imur il-kulur - igifieri - it is simple - I mean il-hwejjeg li huma - li ghandhom il-kulur fihom you can't bleach it bleach them ok ghaliex il- kulur - imur - (d,ii,l)....

Translation

T: it shrinks ok that means either material which shrinks when we say it shrinks right hm is not washed or else material which is hm delicate or else that something happens to it in the machine for example like suede right suede you know what suede is eh I showed you a picture of it suede if it is washed gets stained so that we don't wash because it says on the care label you have hm a sign like this right now this is for washing *(writes on B/B)* now then there are these two symbols I mean there are these two symbols have you any ideas what these symbols stand for?

Ps: bleach

T: very good bleach one of them right one of them we can bleach and this one we do not bleach now what types of material can we bleach?

P: cotton

T: cotton Marica

P: I forgot

T: you've forgotten already obviously try to think that for example a dress like mine can I bleach it?

P: no

T: no why not?

P: because it loses colour

T: because it loses colour that means it is simple I mean coloured clothes you can't bleach them ok because they lose colour.

4.1 English influence on Maltese

(a) Assimilation

Haugen (1956) draws two classifications on the basis of degree or manner of integration of a particular element. The first one is a phonemic classification where elements can be wholly or partially assimilated or unassimilated when there is no adaptation to the phonology of the recipient language.

It is difficult to find examples of English linguistic items used by Maltese speakers that have not in some way or other been adapted to the phonology of Maltese. The following are some examples of wholly and partially assimilated elements.

Examples of wholly assimilated items:[2]

kuker	/ku:ker/	*cooker*
kejk	/kejk/	*cake*
Amerka	/amerka/	*America*

Examples of partially assimilated items:

structure	/straktʃer/	*structure*
function	/fankʃin/	*function*
triangle	/trajengil/	*triangle*
symbols	/simbils/	*symbols*
shrinks	/ʃrinks/	*shrinks*

On the morphemic level there can be total substitution as in *loan translation*, also known as *loan shift* or *calque* when morphemic substitution occurs without any importation from the donor language; *loanblends* when there is partial substitution, or *loanword* when there is no morphemic substitution.

Loanwords seem to be the most common examples in Maltese as in the examples above, and they are either partially or wholly assimilated.

Examples of loan shift are found in Maltese English as in the expression "things that run" for "things that normally happen", but I have not yet come across other examples in classroom data. Loanblends in Maltese are similar to the inflectional morphology examples below.

(b) Inflectional morphology

Hudson (1980: 60) gives the example of inflectional morphology as a kind of crosslinguistic influence. There are many examples of this kind of language influence in Mixed Maltese English and the following are some examples from classroom talk:

tistorja	/tisto:rja/	*she stores*
tistreccja	/tistretʃja/	*she stretches*
tiddrajklinja	/tid:rajkli^{ə}nja/	*to dry clean*
nibblicjaha	/nib:li^{ə}tʃja:/	*I bleach it*

(c,e) Tag-switching

Poplack (1980) speaks about the insertion of a tag in one language which is otherwise entirely in the other language. Tag-switching can occur either in Maltese or English utterances as in:

Teacher: it's a little spec, tara? *(can you see?)*

Teacher: kif rajniha l-bierah, right? *(as we saw it yesterday, right?).*

Teacher: bhal din, right? *(like this one, right?).*

(d) Code-switching

Gumperz (1982) speaks about conversational code-switching. This, unlike situational code-switching, which is more like diglossia, takes place in a situation where there is no change in situation or topic but there is a change in code. Conversational code-switching can be further subdivided according to Poplack's (1980) categories of intrasentential and intersentential code-switching.

Intrasentential code-switching of different types occurs within the clause or sentence boundary (as in tag-switching for example); while intersentential code-switching involves a switch at a clause or sentence boundary or when speakers take turns. Examples of intrasentential code-switching in Maltese:

Teacher: that changed food ikun jista' jghaddi mit-tube ghac-cells
(will be able to pass from the tube to the cells).

Teacher: il-hwejjeg li ghandhom il-kulur fihom you can't bleach
(coloured clothes can't be bleached).

Examples of *intersentential switching*:

Teacher: we have substances going in and out issa ha naraw minn fejn sa jidhlu
(now let us see where they get in from);

Teacher: basta jkollok two sides u included angle
(as long as you have two sides and included angle).

Teacher: there are these two symbols ghandkom ideja ghal x'hiex inhuma?
(have you any idea what they mean?).

and in turn taking:

Teacher A: ma qallek xejn tajjeb jew hazin?
(didn't he tell you anything whether it was right or wrong?)

Teacher B: he didn't say anything, nothing;

Student: and an angle

Teacher: eh mela mhux and an angle
(no of course not and an angle).

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Blom and Gumperz (1971) describe an instance of metaphorical code-switching when a variety normally used in one kind of situation is used in a different kind because the topic is the sort which would normally arise in the first kind of situation, as for example, when someone is speaking in Maltese and then quotes what somebody else has said in English and actually says it in English. There are examples of this from Mixed Maltese English but no examples have as yet come up in classroom data. An example from a non-classroom situation is the following:

Speaker: Imbaghad qalli "Edinburgh is a very good University" *(then he told me ...)*.

4.2 Maltese influence on English

(f) Grammar

From the limited amount of data of Maltese English (as opposed to Mixed Maltese English) collected from classrooms there are no examples of Maltese grammatical influence on English. However I present the following instances of spoken Maltese English as documented by Navarro and Grech (1984) as examples of this category;

- omission of the negative, as in *Mind you cut your foot on the rocks* (Maltese: Ara taqta' saqajk)
- pronoun precedes verb, as in *Try you* (Maltese: Ipprova int)
- intensifying an intensifier, as in *This steak is much more better than the one I ate yesterday* (Maltese: Dan l-istejk hafna ahjar milli kilt il-bierah)

Navarro and Grech (1984) also give some examples of lexical choice deviance as in *Don't stand in the middle* for "Don't stay in the way" (Maltese: Toqoghdx fin-nofs) and the omission of DO-support, as in *You want ice-cream?* (Maltese: Trid gelat?). Such examples, they comment, are prominent features of Maltese English.

(g) Phonology

1. A phonetic distinction made in Standard English (SE) which is conspicuously absent in Maltese-English (ME) is that of the environmentally conditioned 'dark l' as for example at the end of the word *lull* as opposed to the 'clear l' at the beginning of the word *lip*. The phoneme /l/ is indiscriminately realized as [l] in ME and never as [ɫ]. (Vella, 1991 personal communication).
2. Voicing distinctions made in SE may also differ slightly in ME. Maltese devoices obstruents word-finally. It is therefore highly likely that ME may be characterized by non-standard patterns of voicing and instances of word-final devoicing especially may frequently be noted.
3. Maltese speakers substitute the dental/alveolar stops /t/ and /d/ for the fricatives /θ/ and /ð/.
4. Centralized vowels do not have phonemic status in Maltese and this could account for the fact that the renditions of central vowels of ME would be peripheralized; /a/ being given an articulation more appropriate for SE [ə] and [ʌ].
5. Where vowel reduction occurs, it seems to be much more restricted in ME than it would be in SE, and there seems to be a tendency in ME not to reduce vowels, even when these occur in what would be unstressed positions. This has implications

for the rhythm of ME as compared with the rhythm of SE (see also Vella 1988). Calleja (1987: 113) outlines three related features that characterize ME in this sense:

i. the occurrence of vowels of same quality in both stressed and unstressed positions;
ii. the increased number of stressed syllables and therefore of feet in the utterance;
iii. the increased number of tonic stresses and, hence, of tone groups.

5 Implications

The implications that emerge from this intense crosslinguistic influence are relevant both to language teaching practice as well as to language planning in education, and include the following:

- To what extent should features of crosslinguistic influence be corrected in (i) spoken and (ii) written language produced by students in both Maltese and English?
- Which model of each language is more appropriate in such a situation, e.g. Maltese English or British English?
- If Maltese English is really set as a target, in what ways would this affect English language proficiency in the future?
- How important is international intelligibility in a tourist island like Malta and what effects would the promotion of Maltese English have in this case?
- What effect does crosslinguistic influence have on the pupils' proficiency in both Maltese and English?
- To what extent can/should the Maltese language be allowed to assimilate English items?
- Should a policy be set up to determine which language should be used during which lessons?

This brief description of Mixed Maltese English suggests a need for a more detailed functional analysis of mixed speech as a medium of instruction. There are various perspectives from which the transcript data could be studied, e.g. from a classroom process point of view to discover the pedagogical functions of mixed speech; linguistically, to analyze crosslinguistic influence at morphological and syntactic levels; and more generally, to find out about the macro-sociolinguistic meaning of the use of Mixed Maltese English as a medium of instruction.

Notes

1. Symbols used in the transcript:

T = teacher　- = pause of less than 2 seconds
P = pupil　+ = pause of 2-3 seconds
Ps = pupils　++ = pause of more than 3 seconds

2. The examples of assimilation and inflectional morphology take the form: Maltese spelling; phonemic transcription between obliques; and English spelling in italics.

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ASSESSING THE READABILITY OF MEDICAL JOURNAL ARTICLES: AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHER JUDGEMENTS

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Abstract

This paper is the first stage of a wider enquiry into alternative ways of assessing the readability of specialist texts. In it, we report an investigation of subjective judgements of difficulty by 'expert' raters. This involved the identification of possible components of difficulty and their independent assessment and scoring by five raters. Subsequent analysis focused on the structure and reliability of these judgements. Preliminary results of the data analysis indicate that four out of the seven components possessed satisfactory levels of inter-rater reliability, and that syntactic and lexical difficulty as assessed by the raters may be the best predictors of overall difficulty. Finally, there is statistical evidence that the putative judgement by the raters of seven discrete components may be more adequately modelled as the assessment of two 'latent' components of difficulty.

1. Introduction

Our interest in assessing the readability of medical journal articles arose from a practical concern. We needed to grade 60 medical journal articles for an individualized EFL reading scheme for doctors.

The methods most commonly used for grading texts are readability formulae, cloze procedure, comprehension questions, and subjective judgement. Cloze procedure and comprehension questions were not appropriate for our purposes: quite apart from other considerations, they were excluded on practical grounds, in that we would have required many more student readers than were available to us at the time in order to obtain significant results. Our choice therefore lay between readability formulae and subjective judgement.

Readability formulae have the advantage of objectivity, in that they assign a numerical value to linguistic variables. However, they have limitations. One limitation, of particular relevance for assessing specialist texts, is that the linguistic variables in the most well-known and rigourously tested formulae (Dale-Chall, Flesch, FOG etc.) are defined in terms of "average" general English. Word difficulty, for example, may be assessed by recording the number of words not represented in high frequency word lists, or by using number of syllables as a proxy measure of difficulty. These methods are clearly not suitable for assessing the readability of medical texts, because long words like gastrointestinal, radiotherapy and gynaecologist are typical "core" words in medical English and are not likely to be difficult for the specialist reader.

This example touches on a wider problem in applying readability formulae to specialist texts: they do not take account of the subject knowledge brought to bear on the text by the specialist reader. Yet schema theory indicates that background knowledge has an effect on readability. Finally, most readability formulae were constructed before recent developments in the study of discourse and rhetorical organisation, and therefore take no account of these dimensions.

For all these reasons, we decided to assess the readability of our specialist texts by subjective judgement. The main limitation of this method is the loss of reliability. However, the risk can be reduced by "expert" judgement (usually the judgement of experienced teachers); by further training of judgement, as is typically done with a team of examiners; and by pooling judgements. The principal advantage is that subjective judgement can synthesize a complex range of factors into an overall assessment of difficulty.

In view of our developing interest in grading specialist texts, we decided that the materials writing project would be a useful platform for a research study examining the reliability and validity of alternative ways of assessing readability; in this particular case readability formulae and subjective expert judgement. Since we had opted for the latter in our materials project, we began with an investigation of the nature of subjective judgement. It is this that is the focus of the present paper.

2. Scope of this paper

We have already mentioned that our main reason for preferring subjective judgements over readability formulae was that the latter took no account of a number of significant factors contributing to difficulty. We felt it likely that our subjective judgments would take account of these factors, and therefore be more sensitive estimates of difficulty, particularly with specialist texts.

In this paper we attempt to test these claims by examining in closer detail some properties of subjective judgement, in particular its capacity to encompass and reliably assess various putative components of difficulty.

The first essential task, then, was the identification on theoretical and intuitive grounds of distinct components of difficulty (see list below). The second was the assessment by a team of five raters of the components of difficulty for each of the graded texts.[1] This assessment provided numerical data for the analysis given in section 5 of this paper.

The questions we wished to ask of these data were as follows:

(i) We wished to establish the degree of agreement between the five judges for each of the seven subjectively assessed components of difficulty (i.e the degree of inter-rater reliability). We reasoned that whilst we might naturally expect some divergence between raters, a low correlation would be evidence that the raters were either conceptualizing the component differently, and consequently applying themselves to its measurement in quite different ways, or that the individual rater was unable to operate consistently with respect to that component. This would suggest, in turn, that the component lacked stability, or possibly coherence.

(ii) We wished to find out which of the seven components of difficulty made the greatest independent contribution to overall text difficulty. Which, in other words, were the best predictors of grade level, and which were relatively redundant?

(iii) We also wanted to know more about the inherent dimensionality of our data. Were the raters in fact operating with seven discrete dimensions of difficulty, or were these to any degree psychologically confounded in the process of judgement? We were asking, in other words, whether a smaller set of underlying dimensions could be so constructed as to more adequately represent what the raters were actually assessing.

3. Identification of distinct components of difficulty

The first stage of our research involved the identification and operational definition of components of text difficulty. Operational definitions were required to distinguish the components and make them accessible to measurement.

Below are the definitions that emerged from our deliberations. We do not claim that they are comprehensive, or even that they render the components, in the strictest sense of the word, observable. The definitions went only as far as we felt necessary at the time to allow us to believe that we shared an understanding of what we were measuring.

(i) Length

Definition: (Approximate) number of words in the body of a text.

Comment: Length *per se* has little independent effect on text difficulty but interacts with other factors (e.g. conceptual complexity) on which it has an "add-on" effect - thus increasing overall text difficulty.

(ii) Print size

Definition: Size of the print in the body of the text and the amount of space between the lines.

Comment: This is an affective rather than a cognitive factor because it mainly works on the motivation of the reader. However, print size may have an independent effect on some of the lower-level reading processes (e.g. visual recognition of letter shapes and word boundaries, and may thus affect the reading of those accustomed to other scripts (e.g. Arab and Japanese students).

(iii) Topic accessibility

Definition: Degree of specialization of text.

Comment: Degree of specialization is used as a proxy for familiarity with topic which, though recognised as an important factor, is difficult to estimate directly owing to variation in reader experience and interest. It is primarily a reader-oriented variable. Degree of specialization can be roughly estimated by the type of technical terminology.

(iv) Organization

Definition: Predictability and degree of conventionality of the rhetorical structure of the text.

Comment: The key word here is "genre". If a text belongs to a genre (e.g. case report, research report, or description of disease) for which there are readily recognizable conventions regarding organization of information then the reader (by virtue of prior knowledge of these conventions) is likely to find it easier to find his way around the text.

(v) Contextual support

Definition: Pictures, diagrams, tables, headings, sub-headings and other features of text lay-out (e.g. boxes, italics, bold print).

Comment: Contextual support is hypothesized to make reading a text easier in a number of possible ways: it may increase redundancy of information, represent information contained in the text in a non-verbal manner, summarize and condense important points etc. Headings and titles are particularly important because they "prime" the reader's expectations, allowing him to engage appropriate schemata, thereby facilitating "top-down" processing.

The contextual support factor may perhaps be enhanced in importance once questions have been set on a text (because of the facilitation it lends to tasks).

A word of warning however: not all tables and diagrams provide contextual support. Some add to the information load.

(vi) Information density

Definition: Number of information items contained in a text, in proportion to the length of the text overall.

Comment: Information items are primarily conceived to be factual details though they may also be points in an argument, or opinions, or "discrete ideas". A text with many descriptive details or containing many numerical figures could, for instance, be said to be informationally dense. The "piling-up" of such details increases the information load that the reader is required to process, and may thereby not only slow the reader down but make reading more difficult.

(vii) Conceptual complexity

Definition: Degree to which concepts, notions, ideas, arguments and relationships between entities are difficult to understand.

Comment: This is thought to be an important general factor affecting text difficulty simply by virtue of the conceptual difficulty involved in processing the meanings of the text. Because of the generality of the factor and the difficulty involved in specifying it precisely, it is likely to be particularly heavily intercorrelated with the variables of information density and topic accessibility.

A text may be thought of as conceptually complex to the extent that (a) it involves a high level of abstraction or idealization away from concrete or context-supported entities or relationships, (b) it involves complex chains of reasoning or argument of an abstract nature, and (c) the concepts presented in the text are novel or unusual, requiring considerable modification of readers' existing schemata. Typically, an abstract argumentative text is more conceptually complex than either a primarily descriptive text or a narrative text.

(viii) Syntactic complexity

Definition: Syntactic complexity refers to grammatical features such as embedding, subordination, clause length, ellipsis and referential substitution, double-negation and noun-phrase complexity (especially in subject function). Where these features are widely distributed in a text, then that text may be said to be syntactically complex.

Comment: Syntactic complexity is relatively easy to assess - being a "text-as-object" related variable. There are objective measures of syntactic complexity which are more or less adequate (e.g. T-units). Syntactic complexity is believed to be an important contributor to overall difficulty.

(ix) Lexical difficulty

Definition: The lexical difficulty of a text may be assessed by reference to the proportion of words which are likely to be unfamiliar or unknown to the reader. The main criterion for this is the relative frequency of occurrence of the word in everyday usage. A word may also be unfamiliar, however, if it is drawn from another field of discourse (e.g. the theatre). Also contributing to lexical difficulty are: a high proportion of words which are in wide general usage but with a high indexical value (i.e. items which have many different senses that vary according to context), and for some readers a high proportion of words of Anglo-Saxon origin (i.e. which do not have a Greek or Latin origin).

Comment: Lexis is widely assumed to have a significant effect on text readability (hence it is frequently controlled in simplified readers).

The first two components of difficulty, length and print size, are excluded from the following analysis and discussion because they are objectively measurable. Our present purpose is the investigation of the subjectively assessed components.

4. Measuring the components of difficulty

Bachman (1990) points out that the first step in measurement is to distinguish the construct you are interested in measuring from other similar constructs by defining it as precisely and unambiguously as possible. The next step is to make the definition operational that is, to define the construct in such a way as to make it observable. Assuming that these two steps have been implemented in the previous section, we come to the following stage the systematic quantification of observations using defined units of measurement.

Our procedure here was as follows. For each text, each of the five raters first recorded their assessment for grade level (see Appendix for an account of the procedure followed for allocating texts to grade level). Once it became apparent that grading was consistent, each rater in addition recorded on a visual analogue scale an assessment for each of the seven components of difficulty. This was done for 31 texts out of the total of 60, and in all cases the allocation to grade level was carried out prior to and independently of the assessment of the components of difficulty. The marks on the visual analogue scales were subsequently converted into numerical scores on a scale 0-126 by measuring the distance in millimetres from the rater's mark to the lowest point on the analogue scale.

We opted to start from a visual analogue scale because we believed it would facilitate the judges' assessment by removing from them the responsibility of assigning a numerical score to each of the seven components for each of the 31 texts in the study. To require them to assign a numerical score would be to make distracting demands of precision.

We recognize that the procedures documented above are not unproblematic. First, the conversion of a visual analogue scale to a numerical scale of 0-126 may give a misleading impression of the precision of the initial assessment of the components. Second, although some would prefer to regard scales deriving from subjective judgement as ordinal scales, we have chosen to treat the scale derived from the visual analogue as an equal interval scale. We feel these procedures are defensible, especially as our investigation is preliminary and exploratory, not confirmatory.

5. Results and discussion

5.1 Inter-rater reliability for the assessment of the seven subjectively assessed component

Inter-rater reliability was investigated by inter-correlating each rater's score on each of the seven components in turn. A summary of the correlations obtained for each of the components (Table 1) shows that a respectable level of agreement between raters was attained with regard to four of the seven components. We reason that this indicates that these constructs have at least some stability, and that their operational definitions possess at least some adequacy. By contrast, there is a low degree of agreement with two of the components, suggesting that they lack stability as constructs. In fact, since raters diverge so markedly in their scores for these components, it is possible that they are operating with quite different notions of what the terms 'information density' and 'topic accessibility' denote.

Table 1: Inter-rater reliability on assessment of the seven components of difficulty

Range of correlations between raters scores	Component
(a) High agreement 0.60 - 0.90	Conceptual Complexity Lexical difficulty Syntactic Complexity Contextual Support
(b) Moderate agreement 0.40 - 0.60	Rhetorical organisation
(c) Low agreement 0.00 - 0.40	Information Density Topic Accessibility

These results were not surprising, as the components with a high degree of inter-rater correlation were the easiest to define operationally. They are relatively well-established constructs featuring in numerous discussions of readability, and, with the possible exception of conceptual complexity, they are relatively directly observable. By contrast, the unstable components, showing a low degree of inter-rater agreement, always presented problems of operational definition. In the case of 'information density', for example, there is some indeterminacy about what constitutes a unit of information. It is hardly very surprising, then, that raters differ over when a text is informationally dense.

The construct of 'topic accessibility' is problematic for two reasons. First, it is highly reader-dependent since what is accessible for one individual may not be for another. Divergence, then, between individual raters is only natural. Second, its operational definition is very indirect. The type of technical terminology indicates degree of specialization which in turn is related to familiarity, and finally to topic accessibility.

We suggest, therefore, that the components of 'topic accessibility' and 'information density' be excluded from consideration in any future judgements of components of text difficulty unless their operational definition can be improved and more direct indices devised. Note, however, that we are not denying their potential significance. However, it seems worth persevering with the four components whose assessment exhibits higher inter-rater reliability.

5.2. The contribution of the seven components as predictors of text difficulty

Our next research objective was to find out which of the seven 'subjective' components were the best predictors of overall text difficulty as indicated by grade level. Remember that all the texts in our study had already been reliably allocated between seven grade levels as part of the construction of the medical English reading scheme. It was possible, then, for us to consider grade level as our dependent variable and the seven subjectively assessed components as predictor or independent variables. Our question was now as follows: what was the unique contribution of each independent variable in the determination of grade level, or, more technically, how might the variance in the dependent variable be apportioned between the various predictor variables?

The reason for desiring an answer to this question will be familiar to those with experience of readability formulae research and development. It is that if we can isolate variables with minimal predictive power, we can dispense with them so making the whole business of determination of level of difficulty more economical.

The preferred technique for answering this question is normally multiple regression analysis because it has the power of isolating the unique correlation of each independent variable with the dependent variable by taking account of and excluding the intercorrelation of that independent variable with others. Prior to undertaking the analysis, there is, however, one important decision to be made which has to with the very nature of the analysis. For technical reasons, (see Woods, Fletcher and Hughes 1986; Hatch and Farhaday 1982), it is important which variable is entered first into the regression equation. There are two methods of proceeding. The first is to enter the variables according to some order of importance that is believed to be theoretically and logically defensible. The second is to operate entirely empirically and allow the computer to decide the order in which the variables enter the equation. Normally, of course, the variable with the highest correlation with dependent variable is entered first. This second method, stepwise regression, is the one we have adopted for this study.

Before presenting the results of the stepwise regression, it may be useful to include two further pieces of information to facilitate interpretation of the multiple regression. These are (a) the inter-correlations between the seven subjectively assessed variables, and (b) the correlation of each predictor variable with the dependent variable before the computation of their unique correlation with the dependent variable.

Table 2: Inter-correlation matrix for seven subjectively assessed predictor variables

	infod	lex	concept	sytax	organ	topic	context
lex	0.399						
concept	0.542	0.819					
sytax	0.555	0.844	0.942				
organ	-0.108	0.458	0.526	0.437			
topic	0.537	0.629	0.748	0.727	0.361		
context	-0.208	0.276	0.297	0.212	0.766	0.160	
gradelev	0.607	0.896	0.924	0.925	0.430	0.668	0.213

Table 2 shows a high correlation between a number of predictor variables, in particular the following pairs: conceptual complexity/syntactic complexity 0.94, syntactic complexity/lexical difficulty 0.84, conceptual complexity/lexical difficulty 0.82. This indicates that to a large extent they overlap and substitute for each other. In other words it is relatively easy to infer the value of one given the value of the other. More problematic is determining the source of the high correlations. It may be that conceptual complexity and syntactic complexity are indeed perceived by raters as distinct dimensions which happen in fact to be closely associated. On the other hand, it may be that raters are simply unable to distinguish clearly between the two, and covertly or subconsciously use the more observable, syntax, as an index of the other.

Table 3: Correlations of predictor variables with the dependent variable (grade level)

Syntactic complexity	0.925
Conceptual complexity	0.924
Lexical difficulty	0.896
Topic accessibility	0.668
Information density	0.607
Rhetorical organisation	0.430
Contextual support	0.213

Table 3 shows the correlations of the predictor variables with the dependent variable. It is interesting to note above that the three predictor variables with the highest inter-correlations are also those with the highest correlations with the dependent variable, grade level. This might be in part an artefact of the high intercorrelations between them, which is precisely what the multiple regression factors out in determining the unique correlations with the dependent variable. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that syntax and lexis, which feature prominently in readability formulae, also have high correlations with grade level in this study. They are also the variables for which there was high inter-rater reliability.

Finally, the results of the stepwise regression (as delivered by MINITAB) are given in Table 4. As might be expected, the first entered variable, syntax, appears to account for the highest proportion of variance in the dependent variable (85.64). Lexis and information density follow with the remaining variables, conceptual complexity and topic accessibility, accounting for progressively less of the variance.

Table 4. Stepwise regression of gradelevel on seven predictor variables

Step	1	2	3	4	5	6
constant		-0.5462	-0.4304	-1.3355	-0.8507	-0.5490
syntax	0.0777	0.0493	0.0378	0.0133		
T-Ratio	13.15	5.34	4.10	0.99		
lex		0.0271	0.0300	0.0279	0.0304	0.0301
T-Ratio		3.65	4.46	4.42	5.25	5.75
infod			0.0199	0.0185	0.0198	0.0232
T-Ratio			2.80	2.79	3.07	3.87
concept				0.0235	0.0312	0.0405
T-Ratio				2.35	4.92	6.00
topic						-0.0187
T-Ratio						-2.63
S	0.783	0.656	0.588	0.544	0.544	0.493
R-SQ	85.64	90.27	92.46	93.78	93.55	94.91

It would seem, then, that syntax, lexis and information density are the components making the largest contribution in the determination of grade level. One has to remember, however, that information density has already been shown to be an unstable construct and thus its contribution should remain an object of the utmost scepticism.

Possibly more important than the details of the regression analysis is the broad tendency it indicates. Taken together with the evidence mentioned earlier, one is left with the impression that in this study syntax and lexis are the components of difficulty that really count. They are the best predictors of grade level and they are also components with high inter-rater reliability. Other components do make a contribution but adding them in does not much increase the predictive power.

Interestingly, this is broadly consistent with the findings of readability formulae constructors, that syntax and lexis were the best indicators of text difficulty. One has to pose the question, then, whether it is worth persevering with dimensions of difficulty which offer little predictive yield, and which may be difficult to measure reliably.

5.3 The underlying dimensionality of the data

Our third area of investigation concerns the inherent dimensionality of our data. The judges assessed seven putatively distinct and discrete dimensions of text difficulty. However, given that some of the components are highly inter-correlated, one can ask if there is a smaller set of dimensions underlying the data. Or, to put the question another way: can the seven dimensions that the raters thought they were assessing be collapsed to a smaller number of dimensions which are so constructed that they are more representative of what the raters were actually assessing? If so, then identifying the number and nature of these underlying dimensions may be expected then to provide clues as to the nature of the judgement process.

The statistical procedure we have chosen for this part of our investigation is principal components analysis. This differs from the better known factor analysis in that it is (a) more objective, though less flexible, (b) more robust in its assumptions about the distribution of scores in a population, and (c) more suited to initial exploratory analysis of the kind we are pursuing here.

Table 5: Principal components analysis of seven subjectively assessed dimensions of text difficulty (by covariance method)

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Eigenanalysis of the Covariance Matrix

Eigenvalue  2889.78    1229.9     260.0      182.8      128.5      96.3
Proportion    0.600     0.255     0.054      0.038      0.027      0.020
Cumulative    0.600     0.855     0.909      0.947      0.973      0.993

Eigenvalue     32.8
Proportion    0.007
Cumulative    1.000

Variable        PC1       PC2       PC3        PC4        PC5        PC6
indfod        0.148     0.330    -0.468     -0.479      0.280     -0.586
lex           0.496     0.169     0.708     -0.231     -0.280     -0.293
concept       0.527     0.186    -0.178      0.130      0.280      0.389
sytax         0.411     0.209     0.030      0.010      0.312      0.360
organ         0.327     0.443    -0.027      0.602      0.260     -0.511
thlopic       0.299     0.175    -0.465      0.246     -0.766     -0.018
context       0.299     0.747    -0.175     -0.527     -0.116      0.171

Variable        PC7
indfod        0.017
lex          -0.007
concept      -0.640
sytax         0.748
organ         0.074
thlopic       0.130
context       0.025
```

Table 5 shows the results of the principal components analysis (PCA), which are the basis for the subsequent discussion. There are two key issues in the interpretation of the results of principal components analysis: (a) how many principal components (or underlying dimensions) should be dignified with recognition and (b) what meaning should be attached to the resulting components? Let us take the number problem first.

The first component (eigenvalue 2889.8) accounts for 0.6 (60%) of the total variance, while the second component (eigenvalue 1229.9) accounts for a further 0.25 (25%) of the total variance. These two components together account for just over 85% of the total variance. The remaining components account for progressively less variance.

We also need to know how many components to accept. There is an objective method of doing so, but it requires such complex computation that a rule of thumb is commonly used: "if the original data has p dimensions, assume that components which account for less than a fraction 1/p of the total variance should be discarded" (Woods, Fletcher and Hughes 1986: 283)

We found that we should discard components accounting for less than 14% of the total variance, which left us with only two of the components. In other words only two distinct dimensions underlie the original seven. Perhaps, then, the judges were in fact operating with two dimensions though they may have believed they were independently assessing seven.

The next problem is to interpret what these two components mean. Technically speaking, they stand in need of reification. If we examine how the principal components correlate with the original seven variables, we see that the first principal component correlates positively with all the original variables. This is unsurprising since the first principal component is typically a 'general factor'. It is, if you like, a kind of composite of the original variables. There is, however, a bias towards higher correlation with the variables of conceptual complexity (0.527), lexical difficulty (0.496), and syntactic complexity (0.411). This suggests that the first principal component may represent a factor of 'general language difficulty'.

The second principal component presents even greater problems of interpretation. It has a relatively high positive correlation with information density (0.330), and relatively high negative correlations with contextual support (-0.747) and rhetorical organization (-0.443). Thus, a text with a high score on this component will tend to have an above average score for information density, a below average score for rhetorical organization and a markedly below average score for contextual support. All this may perhaps point to the second component having something to do with contextual support and rhetorical organization. Even this, however, leaves problems of interpretation. Perhaps, one might give the label 'textual lay-out/organization' to the second component.

Our analysis, then, has led us to conclude that there are two significant dimensions in our data. We have chosen to interpret these as (a) 'general language difficulty', and (b) 'textual lay-out/organization'. The purpose of undertaking the analysis, however, goes was to uncover clues as to the nature of the process of judging text difficulty. Here we can speculate that what the judges were actually doing was (a) estimating the general language difficulty of the text and (b) deriving an impression of the relative ease of the text by sampling fairly superficial characteristics of appearance (diagrams, tables, subheadings etc) as well as rhetorical organization.

We must be cautious, however. The difficulty in interpreting the second component draws attention to Woods et al's (1986) point that PCA is an exploratory instrument. Clearly, further detailed investigation of the components is required.

6. Conclusion

It will be clear that this is indeed very much a working paper. Our analysis of the data is preliminary and exploratory, and much work remains to be done. Nevertheless, we have, we believe, turned up some results of interest.

We have shown that some of our components of text difficulty possess greater stability and reliability than others. In particular, the components of topic accessibility and information density are so unstable as to be hardly worth persevering with in their present form. A general lesson is that it is one thing to identify possible components of difficulty on theoretical and intuitive grounds but quite another to define them operationally and render them accessible to reliable measurement. Perhaps, then, there is something to be said in favour of the concentration of readability formulae on lexical and syntactic difficulty.

This latter point is also borne out by the evidence from our multiple regression analysis. This, again, suggests that the linguistic components of syntactic complexity and lexical difficulty are the best single predictors of overall text difficulty (grade level). Information density comes third, but we have noted how unstable it is. The remaining components appear to be something of a luxury. Individually, and collectively, they account for little of the remaining variance in grade level, and some are assessed with barely satisfactory inter-rater reliability.

In a sense, then, many of our findings are negative but interestingly so. We started from the belief that subjective judgements could encompass a wider range of factors than readability formulae. More detailed comparability studies are needed.

PCA constitutes another area of investigation. Using this technique, we sought to get below the surface of things - never an easy thing. In particular, we wanted to find out more about the structure of judgements of text difficulty. Our tentative findings were that raters appeared to operate with two dimensions: (a) a dimension of 'general language difficulty' and (b) one of 'textual lay-out/organization'.

Having gone this far, we can identify at least three possible directions for further research. First, we need to refine and elaborate some of our existing statistical analyses, particularly in relation to principal components analysis. Second, we wish to compare the estimates of text difficulty of different categories of rater, e.g. medical English teachers, non-native doctors, and native speaker doctors. Third, we would like to compare raters with readability formulae in terms of how they rank texts according to difficulty. Taken together these investigations may offer some further clues as to the nature of readability in relation to medical journal articles.

Note

1. The five raters were: Gibson Ferguson, Ron Howard, Joan Maclean, Anne Murray and Alison Oates.

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Appendix

The allocation of texts to seven levels of difficulty: Grading procedure.

The judges were five experienced medical English teachers (one of whom was also a qualified doctor).

We selected 60 articles from medical journals, representing what appeared to us to be the range of difficulty in these journals. Articles which were not "mainstream medicine" (such as discussions of medico-legal matters, ethical aspects of medical practice, or salary and working conditions) were excluded from the selection. The source journals were in the main generalist rather than specialist medical journals, i.e. the target readership was anyone with medical qualifications rather than doctors from a particular specialty. We hoped thereby to go some way towards controlling for difficulty due to inappropriacy of the text for the reader with regard to subject matter.

(i) We viewed the collection of 60 texts and agreed on which text was likely to be the easiest, and which the most difficult, for an "ideal non-native speaker doctor". These two texts therefore represented the end-points of our range of difficulty.

(ii) We then individually made judgments about the difficulty of three other texts in relation to each other and the endpoint texts, i.e. we separately ranked the five texts. One of the texts was agreed to be roughly in the middle of the range of difficulty, and so we now had three "criterial" texts (bottom, middle, and top) to be used as reference points for ranking other texts.

(iii) We tried to view the range as a continuum but found that we were so much influenced by working with the seven levels of an earlier version of the graded reading programme that we tended to think in terms of seven levels. We therefore proceeded to allocate texts to a grade level (from 1 to 7). It should be noted that we made no claim that the grades divide the continuum into equal intervals of difficulty. The grades represent ranks of difficulty.

(iv) This process was repeated with small numbers of texts until we were confident that we were judging consistently. After 11 texts were ranked, we were able to proceed more quickly with the remaining 49. Further "criterial" texts (to an eventual total of seven, one for each grade level) were identified as reference points as we proceeded.

(v) In order to establish the grading for the ESP reading programme, we then pooled the overall judgments of the five judges. In fact, although there were occasional discrepancies between judges, the rate of agreement was extremely high.

(vi) As a point of interest, about two months after the graders were finished, each judge independently ranked all 60 texts (without looking at the grading papers). The correlations across judges were high (about 0.95).

LITERARY DISCOURSE AND IRONY: SECRET COMMUNION AND THE PACT OF RECIPROCITY

Sonia S'hiri (DAL)

Abstract

This paper explores some of the characteristics of literary discourse (interaction, dialogism, and reciprocity between authors and readers on the one hand, and the multilayeredness of the levels of discourse, on the other) in their relation to the communication of verbal irony as a form of secret communion, drawing particularly on Sperber and Wilson's approach to the subject. The role of genre-related expectations, the notions of Given and New, and mutual knowledge in comprehension is also touched upon, especially in relation to irony in literary discourse.

1. Introduction

Research undertaken on oral cultures suggests that irony is present in verbal narrative, but only in a limited manner compared to its occurrence in literate cultures. The reason seems to have a lot to do with writing and print, which, as Ong (1976) claims, create the distance between the "person who produces an utterance" and "the person who takes in the utterance." As Ong further argues in his article *From mimesis to irony: the distancing of voice*, the proximity of the live audience to the story teller and their high degree of participation makes it difficult for irony to thrive in the way it does in the multiple layers of written discourse. Thus,

> Oral cultures appropriate knowledge ceremonially and formulaicly, and their verbalisation remains basically conservative and in principle directly accountable to hearers. Verbal attacks in oral cultures, where such attacks are exceedingly frequent, are normally direct and ostentatiously hostile. Their standard form is the ceremonial taunting, name-calling or fluting that is common, it seems, in most if not indeed absolutely all oral cultures. Of course, oral folk are no more virtuous than the literate. Unreliability there well may be in the verbal performance of many speakers in the world of primary (preliterate) orality but unreliability s not vaunted in this world as a major rhetorical device
>
> (Ong 1976: 13-14)

It is this further complication of the situation of the interaction within literary communication which prompts not only the potential for irony but also its occurrence at different levels of discourse. In Booth's terms, irony becomes a kind of 'secret communion' between author and reader. Such a wording reinforces the covert character of irony, its elusiveness, and associative/dissociative, inclusive/exclusive properties (Myers 1977; Kaufer 1977, 1981; Booth 1983), and raises two main questions which I will try to answer in constructing the core of this paper.

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The first question is concerned with finding out what it is that makes the communication of irony a communion, and how secret that communion can be. The second question addresses the participants in the interaction for whom irony is a secret communion as well as those for whom it is a secret conspired in "behind their backs." Both questions aim at linking Sperber and Wilson's approach to irony and communication with literary features of discourse, in an attempt to extend the theory to account for irony in complex discourse situations. The first question will eventually be linked to the notions of effort and effect, in particular, which determine the relevance of a given discourse, while the second will mainly be related to the notions of second-degree and echoic interpretations.

2. Written discourse: dialogism, reciprocity, and comprehension

It might, first, be worth emphasising the interactive nature of writing. Far from being autonomous and decontextualised, written texts have writers who, just like speakers, have their receivers in mind. The discourse is shaped according to the demands of the communicative situation as well as the readers' expectations. Every part of the structure of the text stands as a witness to the convergence of the writer's purpose in the activity with the provisions she makes for the reader.[1] Stubbs says that it might be possible to regard written language as non-interactive only if

> discourse is seen merely as the realization of sequences of propositions which could be represented in the predicate and propositional calculus: semantic content plus logical relations. However, anything else is interactive. That is, any devices for presenting the semantic content are interactive, since they design discourse for its hearers and readers
> (Stubbs 1983: 212)

This section will try to demonstrate why and how written language is interactive and context-bound, especially in the light of Bakhtin's notion of dialogism and Nystrand's notion of reciprocity. This property constitutes the basis on which the investigation of the production and recognition of irony is to be pursued in the following sections.

2.1 The dialogic aspect of written discourse

To claim that writing is a monologic activity does not imply that it is also monologic in its communicative structure. For every time one engages in writing, there has to be some reason or purpose for undertaking the enterprise in the first place. There has also to be a reader (even if it is oneself, as in the case of diaries or reminder notes) in the eventual context of use. The potential reader's knowledge and expectations determine to a great extent the form and the content that the written text will eventually take. Widdowson (1975) talks, for instance, about the writer's conversing, during the writing activity, with an imaginary reader.

Bakhtin talks about the "internal dialogism of the word... every word is directed toward an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates" (1981: 279). He equally asserts that every prose discourse

> cannot fail to be oriented toward the "already uttered", the "already known", the "common opinion" and so forth. The dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of any discourse. It is the natural orientation of any living discourse.
> (Bakhtin loc. cit.)

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Moreover, he emphasises the social character of language and the individual's propensity to "share being." In a quotation cited in Nystrand (1986: 33), he claims that

> the word is always oriented toward an addressee, toward what the addressee might be ... each person's inner world, and thought has its stabilised social audience that comprises the environments in which reasons, motives, values, and so on are fashioned ... the word is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant ... Each and every word expresses the one relation to the other. I give myself verbal shape from another's point of view, ultimately from the point of view of the community to which I belong. A word is a territory shared by both addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his interlocutor.
>
> (Bakhtin 1973: 85-86, original emphasis)

Bakhtin's dialogism does not stop at the level of production, however; it also encompasses understanding and what he labels "active response." For him, the two are "dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other" (Bakhtin 1981: 283). He notes that active responsive understanding is the only way for meaning to be realised: "The speaker breaks through the alien conceptual horizon of the listener, constructs his own utterance on an alien territory, the listener's, apperceptive background" (loc. cit.). Hence, for an act of communication to be successful, an acknowledgement of the need of the addressee for active responsive understanding has to be made by the addresser in relation to what she has to say. A failure in keeping up with this balance can result in misunderstandings, ambiguity and failures of communication.

2.2 Reciprocity, negotiation, and comprehension

Nystrand's view of written discourse falls in line with Bakhtin's. He starts from the premise that it is not only what a writer intends to say which shapes the direction her text takes. It is mostly the "communicative need of writers to balance their own purposes and intentions with the expectations and needs of readers" (Nystrand 1986: 36) which gives a discourse its final shape. In other words, it is the Reciprocity Principle which accounts for understanding and successful communication. Thus defined, this principle can operate only because of the presupposed existence of a "pact of discourse" or "contract," on the one hand, and "negotiation" and the need for establishing and maintaining a "mutual frame of reference" as well as the existence of a "shared mutual knowledge" underlying all communication, on the other.

The Reciprocity Principle is assumed to govern all social acts, including verbal interaction. Hence, Nystrand says that in "any collaborative activity the participants orient their action on certain standards which are taken for granted as rules of conduct by the social group to which they belong" (Nystrand 1986: 48). Citing Cox (1978:21), he argues that such an orientation leads them to develop a certain co-awareness "not only of what the other is doing saying and so on, and of what I am doing, but also of how what I am doing appears to the other, and even what I must do to communicate more clearly" (loc. cit.).

Clarity in communication or explicitness is thus not so much a matter of saying everything and in well-formed complete sentences. Given the pact of discourse aiming at understanding between the participants and linking what is to be said with their needs and expectations, explicitness is instead a matter of "striking a balance between what needs to be said and what can be assumed." Hence, Nystrand adds,

> writers must initiate and sustain conditions of reciprocity between themselves and their readers if their communication is to be coherent. Texts function and are lucid to the extent that this balance is maintained; they are unclear and dysfunctional to the extent that it is not.
>
> (Nystrand 1986: 72)

It is knowing what to be explicit about that counts if efficient communication is to be achieved. The respective concerns of the writer for expression and the reader for comprehension (ibid.: 95) are what needs to be reconciled for a text to be explicit enough for the purposes of successful communication. Ambiguity and clarity are in fact "not intrinsic qualities of text but rather aspects of agreement on the meaning between conversants" (loc.cit.). Moreover, an "explicit text is not a text whose meaning is completely embodied in the text but rather a text about which relevant contextual evidence is not in dispute" (ibid.: 96). Whether a text is written or spoken, whether it is about philosophy or is a piece of gossip, explicitness remains a function of the demands made on it by the participants, both to express themselves and to understand each other. For instance, legal texts, for all their attempts to say everything in minute detail are not only boring for non-specialists, but do not seem to be easily intelligible either. A word like *Entrance* or *Exit* above a door, on the other hand, for all its brevity and cryptic appearance is as explicit and as intelligible as any person speaking the language would expect from efficient communication. Where such communication is perceived as "a matter of operating on and transforming a shared knowledge base" (ibid.: 41), being aware of what is known is a necessary step towards knowing what to say.

Following Sperber and Wilson (1982), Nystrand rejects the idea of mutual knowledge as a prerequisite for comprehension and considers it instead as a result of that very process. He further contends that in their quest to make sense of what the other participant says or in their negotiation of meaning, people first make sure that a mutual frame of reference has been established between them; a measure that serves to contextualise their expressions and establish an equal common footing on which they can start that expression. They would then proceed with their contributions. But as soon as a disturbance takes shape in the course of the exchange (in the form of a new or unclear contribution), the mutual frame of reference is endangered and can no longer be maintained. A call for re-negotiation thus has to be carried out in the form of a re-establishment of a new frame of reference and a new attempt at its maintenance. In Nystrand's terms,

> discourse is not so much the encoding and the transmission of what the speaker knows as it is a set of procedures whereby the conversants focus jointly on various aspects of what they know for the purpose of examining and perhaps transforming this knowledge.
>
> (Nystrand 1986: 44)

In writing, where the shaping of the text is the responsibility of the writer during the monologic activity, she is faced with the necessity of making crucial decisions about what has to be said and what can be assumed, i.e. what can be treated as given and what should be new. The eventual context of use, the further dimension to which a text has to be attuned if comprehension is to be achieved, has equally to be taken into consideration by the writer. Nystrand notes that

> skilled writers do not modify what they have to say in light of their readers' knowledge or lack thereof; what they actually write - indeed, what they have to say - is largely a result of this situation.
>
> (ibid.: 120)

Whether a definition will have to follow the mention of the word 'semiotics,' for instance, and whether the issues mentioned in relation to it need to be 'buttressed' within a particular text depends to a great extent on what the writer expects the knowledge of her readers' topical knowledge to be. But it depends, moreover, on the function the text will be performing at the time of its reading. Being attuned to that context of use conditions the content of a text as well as its reading. According to Nystrand writers have to perform three tasks, in tune with their readers' comprehension strategies during the composition process. He thus claims that

> first, they must establish a footing by identifying common ground ... In addition, they must contextualise new information - buttressing those points of text which, if not treated, would threaten the established balance of discourse between writers and their readers. And finally (though not necessarily last), they must carefully mark relevant text boundaries to indicate conceptual, narrative, and other shifts, and to break the text into manageable information units.
>
> (ibid.: 101)

Reading, on the other hand, seems to be carried out by a process of elimination. The different layers of context contribute in narrowing down whatever expectations readers might have or develop about the meaning of a given text. The process of elimination continues during the reading process itself, Nystrand (1986: 57) argues, answering the readers' questions "What sort of text?" (genre), "What sort of topic?" (what the text is about), and "What sort of comment?" (what the writer wants to say about the topic). This top-to-bottom approach (from genre to comment) constrains and progressively narrows down the meaning possibilities to be expected within the following level. When the writer's organisation of a given text follows these steps, the reader is confronted with no particular difficulties in reconstructing the meaning of the communication.

2.3 Summary

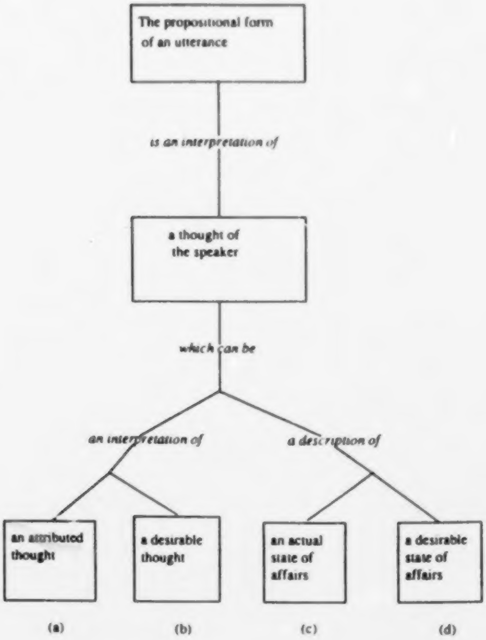
To sum up, a writer charges a text with meanings fashioned in accordance with her primary need for expression, the purpose of that expression, and conformity to the Reciprocity Principle. These potential meanings, in Halliday's terminology, can be actualised into an instantial meaning only through the intervention of a reader whose needs and expectations, coupled with the interpretative context in which the process takes place, are responsible for the interpretation given to the text. "Texts are like electric circuits," Nystrand observes, "There is potential but no arc of meaning until some reader completes the circuit" (1986: 43).

Proceeding from this premise, it is worth considering the way to communicate a problematic phenomenon like verbal irony, which is based on saying one thing and meaning another. A plausible perspective on the subject has been provided by Sperber and Wilson within their consideration of communication in general. The implications of their approach for literary discourse in terms of secret communion will be discussed in section 5, and the implications for the participants in this communion in section 6. But first here is a brief review of their approach to irony as presented within the confines of their larger theory of communication (or Relevance Theory).

3. Sperber and Wilson's approach to irony

According to Sperber and Wilson, verbal irony involves the implicit communication of an attitude of disapproval, or mockery. They classify it under the category of utterances which they call "echoic." An ironical utterance for them conforms to the principle of relevance (minimum processing effort for maximum contextual effects) mainly because of the "information it conveys about the attitude of the speaker to the opinion echoed" (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 239). They maintain that an ironical utterance "is one that echoes an actual or possible opinion of a certain person, or type of person, in order to dissociate oneself from it or make fun of it" (Wilson and Sperber 1986: 30). Since they assume that "every utterance is" in the first place "an interpretive expression of a thought of the speaker" (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 231), every utterance can consequently be used in one of two ways: descriptively or interpretively.

When used descriptively, an utterance either describes a state of affairs in the actual world or a state of affairs that is desirable. When used interpretively, it can be either an interpretation of some attributed thought or utterance, or an interpretation of some thought, which it is desirable to entertain in a certain way (cf. figure below, presented in Sperber and Wilson 1986: 232).



Aspects of verbal communication

Verbal irony falls under the first type of the first category: an interpretation of an attributed thought or utterance. The thought of the speaker which is interpreted by the utterance is itself an interpretation of a thought of somebody other than the speaker (or of the speaker in the past). This kind of utterance is treated as a second-degree interpretation of someone else's thought and is believed to achieve relevance in two ways. First, as in the case of reported speech, the utterance is relevant because it informs the hearer of the fact that a certain person has said something or thinks something. Second, in other cases, relevance is achieved by informing the hearer of the fact that the speaker has in mind what a particular person said and has, besides, a certain attitude towards it. The speaker's interpretation of that other person's thought is considered relevant in itself. Interpretations achieving relevance in this manner (that is, depending on other's utterances) are seen as echoic (Sperber and Wilson 1986).

It is worth noting that for an utterance to be echoic, it does not need to interpret a thought that is attributable to a particular individual. What makes an utterance echoic is not necessarily its earlier enunciation: it can still be considered echoic while uttered for the first time. Sperber and Wilson explain that the

> thought being echoed may not have been expressed in an utterance; it might not be attributable to any specific person, but merely a type of person or people in general; it may be a cultural inspiration or norm.
>
> (Sperber and Wilson 1989: 109)

They add, describing irony, that

> the speaker echoes an implicitly attributable opinion, while simultaneously dissociating herself from it. What differs from case to case are the reasons for the dissociation.
>
> (ibid.)

Hymes, who has discussed this problem of this definition of irony in his study of oral narratives, observes that irony

> when intended may not be echoic in a sense that implies a previous or standard use. An ironic remark may be novel. The ingredient of "echoic" mention may be an implicit comparison of perspectives, a comparison of a present situation to another in which what is said might be said, a possibility perhaps in the future.
>
> (Hymes 1987: 299-300)

The fact that an ironised opinion is not always readily attributable, since the ironist makes it the responsibility of the hearer to uncover its echoic nature and therefore its (actual or possible) originator, grants it the elusiveness and implicitness that have come to characterise its communication. Its recognition is thus constantly jeopardised by these properties. Its being an extremely context-bound phenomenon, involving norms and values whose evaluation and judgement is often relative, also contributes in problematising its recognition. A speaker of an ironical utterance can be said to 'borrow' it from another context in order to comment on the absence of that standard in the situation she is describing: the utterance is called upon to ridicule or criticise the situation at hand.

4. Literary discourse, interaction and comprehension

4.1 Irony and secret communion

Although of a special type, literary communication equally requires the interaction, necessary in written communication in general, between writer and reader through the text for meaning to be achieved. Unlike other types of communication, however, while the Reciprocity Principle holds at the level of genre, it is left to the reader to reconstruct the topic and the comment as the reading activity proceeds on under the presupposed guidance of the writer. "What is unique about fiction," says Nystrand, "is the temporary suspension and promise of reciprocity" (1986: 79). He adds that "whereas the beginning of exposition situates the reader directly in terms of genre, topic, and comment, the beginning of literature situates readers to a kind of text that gains comparable clarity only as readers work their way through" (loc. cit.).

The demand for reciprocity is observed all along by the writer, ultimately leading to understanding (between herself and the reader). The writer builds up a common base from which to start off the work in terms of which the reader will reconstruct what is to be taken as given and what is to be considered as new. Drawing on shared knowledge and bringing selected parts of it to the fore is a way of establishing its mutuality to both interactors and the means to distinguish the given and new distribution in the rest of the text. Besides, world knowledge and generic knowledge are activated to stir readers' expectations about the work and serve as clues and tools for the actualisation of meaning.

Understanding, however, according to Nystrand, does not take place from the start or following the steps normally delineated for informative expository discourse. In literary writing, no glossary or statement of purpose is normally made at the beginning of the work, for instance. No buttressing needs to be undertaken every time a new element is introduced. In the case of characters, for instance, it is generally left to the reader to reconstruct their identity from information gradually (directly or indirectly) provided in the course of narration. Usually, by mentioning a name, the writer seems to establish it as given in the story, as a common frame of reference with the reader from which to proceed.

Thus, because of generic constraints, understanding in literary discourse can be achieved only gradually. It is eventually reached at the completion of the interaction; when the writer's needs for self- expression and the reader's expectations of understanding are realised. All the playfulness with the Reciprocity Principle in between, at the level of topic and comment, is part of the requirements of the literary genre of writing, which include elements such as evaluation, suspense and anticipation.

In the case of ironic texts, a communion between the author and the reader results from this final agreement on meaning, when what has been assumed fits knowledge already available to the reader and what has been said proves to be necessary for comprehension to be achieved. Once the mismatch characteristic of irony between what is said and what is meant is overcome, the author and the reader's communion becomes a secret one. It is as if language is made to speak through itself: what is said is allied with what is assumed, to create what is meant.

Thus, the perception of the duplicity of the words by the reader reflects his close proximity to the author's point of view since it also reflects the amount of mutual knowledge that underlies the interaction. The fact that the reader has had to supply or draw on the particular information necessary for comprehension (about which the writer remained silent on the assumption that the reader would either know it or work it out) proves the accuracy of the writer's expectations about the capacities and the knowledge of her reader. The writer's management of the text in terms of given and new, what can be assumed and what needs to be said, coincides in this way with her assumptions about the reader's knowledge, bringing them together while excluding anybody else who fails to recover and instantiate the intended meaning.

Hence, recognising the ironic nature of an utterance proves that the reader has been capable of going beyond what was said, supplying the missing components necessary for comprehension while staying in tune with the covertness required by irony with no need for the author to declare openly her intentions within the text itself. Usually, backing for an ironic interpretation is to be found in variably subtle clues inserted in the co-text or context by the author for the reader's benefit. The secrecy of the communion is to depend on how much is to be assumed and consequently on how much is to be left for the reader to infer or supply. The more is left unsaid, therefore, the more secret the communion between the interactors can be expected to be.

The amount of effort required for the interpretation reflects the amount of implicitness of an utterance and hence how much has been left for the reader to work out or supply in order to reach a plausible understanding. The greater the processing effort seems, then, the more silent the writer is about a particular matter, the more indirect, inexplicit and secret her communion with the reader.

In the same vein, it can be argued that the greater the processing effort needed for the comprehension of a particular utterance, the greater the number of readers who would fall short of spending the necessary effort and recovering the full pragmatic effect.

Secrecy, this distinctive property of ironic communication, thus plays a socio-linguistic role in terms of determining the type of relationship that links the participants. The less needs to be said, the more probable it becomes that they belong to the same group and therefore, the more things they have in common.

Excluding those readers who fail to activate or possess the knowledge relevant to the interpretation of irony enhances the secrecy of the communion with the writer. A communion achieved by those readers who are alert and willing enough to search for the meaning intended behind the duplicitous words. Booth sums up the point by observing that

> Whenever an author conveys to his reader an unspoken point, he creates a sense of collusion against those, whether in the story or out of it, who do not get that point. Irony is always thus in part a device for excluding as well as for including, and those who are included, those who happen to have the necessary information to grasp the irony, cannot but derive at least part of their pleasure from a sense that others are excluded.
>
> (Booth 1983: 304)

5. Literary discourse situation

Because of the generic constraints on communication in literary discourse, the discourse situation and the participants in the interaction acquire different functions and characteristics than they have in other types of discourse. A large part of the effect in literary discourse is derived from its multi-layeredness. Scholes (1982) declares literariness a function of duplicity in one of the components of Jakobson's communicative act. Duplicity of the addresser, addressee, context, message, contact, and code is a sign of literariness. The duplicity of the addresser and addressee can particularly be brought to the fore in a study of the communication of irony in literary discourse, seeking particular support from Sperber and Wiison's approach to the subject.

Unlike the narration of history or other non-literary narratives, narrative fiction displays a complex discourse situation where utterance attribution - and therefore interpretation - can become problematised. The fictionality of the discourse is responsible for the drawing of lines between real life participants, the author and the reader, and the fictional participants in the interaction, with divisions among the latter delineating further complexities of the discourse situation.

The outcome is an interaction at two different levels of discourse. The first type of interaction exists within the work among its characters on the one hand and between the characters and the narrator on the other. Interpretation of these participants' actions and utterances depends not only on the reader's linguistic competence and knowledge of the world but also involves his coming to terms with the second type of interaction - that between author and reader; what the writer tries to do to steer the flow of meaning in one direction rather than another through a careful manipulation of the presentation of her as well as the characters' actions, thoughts and words. Keeping in mind that the writer and the reader are supposed eventually to come together as a sign of the fulfillment of the conditions of reciprocity, interpretation necessitates a continuous engagement in decision making about who said or did what and where the writer stands in relation to it. Whether to take an utterance or action seriously or ironically, for instance, can be decided only once possible interferences from other participants from the same and higher levels of discourse have been scrutinised.

Misreading is frequently the result of easy acceptance of prima facie statements or actions, disregarding the modifications that could have been revealed through a more thorough consideration of the interaction between the layers of discourse. Critical attribution of thought and attitude within the work is only realised at the author- reader level of interaction (Leech and Short 1981). Assuming with Sell that

> all texts address real life meanings from their creators to their recipients and a creator's estimate of the text's reception by its likely recipient can affect its formation,
>
> (Sell 1985: 498)

the reader will also act accordingly. He will look for what Booth (1983: 105) describes as "rhetoric in the narrower sense - elements that are recognisable, separable, 'friends of the reader'" to guide him through the steps of interpretaiton.

5.1 Participants and layeredness/embedding in literary discourse

As in other types of writing, literary discourse is undertaken between a writer and a reader over a text. Like all narration, it presupposes an addresser and an addressee. The problematic nature and consequently the difference of fictional discourse comes from the anchoring of these interpersonal relationships (author-reader) in other relationships around which the text revolves. The author can thus create meaning for the reader only in an oblique manner, through the text. In the same way, the reader sets up the hunt for sense aiming at the final (re)construction of meaning through that text.

Unlike other types of writing, the correspondence between sender and addresser on the one hand and the receiver and addressee, on the other, as Widdowson points out (1975: 47), is disturbed. The sender and receiver stop being identical to, respectively, the addresser and the addressee and distinguish themselves as belonging to different worlds:

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the former to the real world, and the latter to the world of fiction. A one-to-one relationship between author and reader is thus distorted by the exigencies of the peculiar interaction in which they are engaged, leading them to communicate through the intervention or mediation of other participants.

Clark (1987) devises four dimensions for language use, one of which, the layered dimension provides a rough depiction of what takes place in the case of literary interaction. Clark recognises the presence of at least two layers of discourse in literary writing. He assigns several parameters for every layer: "a principal, a respondent, a setting, a time frame and a social process the principal and the respondent are engaged in" (1987: 16). Successful understanding, according to him, rests on the recognition of the whole pyramid of layers each "nested within the domain of the layer just below it" with "genuine language use ocurring only at the topmost layer" (ibid.: 16,17).

The nucleus within a work of fiction is thus a fictional situation where characters interact with each other. They can address each other or even themselves (as in the case of monologues, or writing diaries). Their discourse situation is usually close to what is depicted in real life, except that whatever the characters do is eventually monitored in some way or other by the author. This layer is encompassed within at least one extra layer, that of the author and the reader. Such a situation brings the discourse close to eavesdropping. Yet it differs fundamentally from it because of the role the author plays in shaping the goings on in the story, rather than merely witnessing their ocurrence without her being able to interfere with any of its developments.

Similar hierarchies of discourse levels based on the binary polarisations of addressers and addressees have been devised by scholars working on fictional discourse to describe the interpersonal structure of such writing. A consensus seems to have been reached regardless of the type of metaphor used to describe the situation (i.e. layeredness or embedding), concerning the exclusion of the real author and the real reader from the actual discourse situation (Chatman 1978; Leech and Short 1981). Adams, (cited in Tan, 1989: 73), for instance, characterises the pragmatic structure of fiction in embedding terms:

W (S (Text) H) R

(W: writer, S: speaker, H: hearer, R: reader)

The writer and reader are thus portrayed as standing on the periphery of the discourse interaction, with a speaker and a hearer involved in the fictional discourse surrounding the text itself. They are further replaced by an implied author and an implied reader who are created to portray them in a manner that is more abstract and stable throughout the work itself and its life as a literary piece. Booth notes that

> the "implied author" chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices.
>
> (Booth 1983: 74-5)

The implied author is needed to perform the role of the agent to whom one can attribute the meaning gathered in the work, however controversial or implausible it might be. Assuming the existence of such a force governing the narrative might render unnecessary a lot of what can become mere speculation about the real author's views. The practicality of this division is pointed out by Booth as he observes that

> it is only by distinguishing between the author and his implied image that we can avoid pointless and unverifiable talk about such qualities as "sincerity" or "seriousness" in the author.
>
> (ibid.: 75)

The implied writer, however, needs the implied reader as the participant equipped with the right knowledge (cultural, historical, literary...) that would guarantee adequate interpretation of the work. Any requirements that are missing can result in pragmatic failure. Cases of irony, parody, and humour are frequently lost on readers who fail to recognise the extra reference needed for adequate interpretation. Ignorance of certain value codes echoed in a specific work because of cultural or historical distance, for instance, can result in serious misinterpretations.

The narrator, who is the participant next in line after the implied author, with a narratee for counterpart, and whose presence seems to be reduced to a minimum in in certain works, is equally crucial in the communication situation. Rimmon-Kenan says that "there is always a teller in the story, at least in the sense that any utterance or record of an utterance presupposes someone who has uttered it" (1983: 88). She defines the narrator as the "agent which at the very least narrates or engages in some activity serving the needs of narration" (loc. cit.). The presence of a narrator is more or less openly perceptible, but she cannot be made to disappear altogether. Her narratees, more or less addressed, are equally always presupposed. The interaction between them can range from direct address in a jocular manner to mere 'showing' accompanied by an elaborate camouflage of the narrator's voice.

The narrator-narratee level of discourse comes right above the level of interaction between characters. The two levels could, however, be conflated when the narrator is not only reporting things about the characters, but also taking part in the story itself. In Genette's terminology, a narrator is *extradiegetic* if she is above or outside the story she narrates, but *intradiegetic* or second- degree, if she also figures as character in the story. These two types of narrator can, moreover, be called *heterodiegetic* if they are absent from the story they narrate or *homodiegetic* if present. The association of extradiegetic and heterodiegetic characteristics in a narrator usually give her omniscience, i.e. knowledge of what takes place everywhere, at the same time.

These levels of discourse, as pointed out in Leech and Short (1981), can be conflated in the absence of a reason for the opposite. Besides, their relations are not stable and do not have to be binary; they can be asymmetrical, reflecting the conflation of levels on one side of the hierarchy or the other. On the other hand, they can be multiplied ad infinitum, reflecting the increase in the levels of interaction and the addition of further layers of discourse. Besides, it might be argued that the layers multiply with the depiction of every irony in a given work, as that presupposes the existence of some real or imagined originator of the opinion echoed for the purposes of ridicule or comment. That new participant, to whom the ironised utterance or thought is attributed, will constitute another layer to be added to the current discourse hierarchy.

6. Layeredness and Irony

In defining irony as an unfavourable echoic response to an implicitly attributable opinion by a speaker in order to dissociate herself from it, we have so far considered it in the context of simple one-to-one utterances where the context is clearly delineated in the physical or linguistic surroundings of the interlocutors. It can be argued, however, that this approach is equally capable of shedding light on the way irony works in the complexity of literary discourse. The potential for incongruity in such discourse is a rich field to exploit for irony, the practice which depends by definition on the duplicity of voice. This definition of irony can thus be functional in literary discourse in at least two ways.

First, it is applicable to the nature of narrative fictional discourse itself. The postulated existence of a minimum of two layers of discourse in literary writing seems to offer fertile ground for second-degree and echoic interpretation utterances. For whether a story is told in the first or third person, a certain distance is always to be presupposed between the subject who is narrating and the experiencer of the action. However close the two may be, the temporal distance conveyed in the act of telling alone is capable of betraying the disparity between experience and reconstruction. Being filtered through the eyes or senses of the teller, the report cannot help being tainted by the latter's perception of the matter. The repercussions on the description or report can easily be detected in the manipulation undergone by the language and the story (as opposed to 'discourse') during the process of reconstruction or 'redescription', in Rorty's terms (1989). Traces of the speaker's choices, preferences, and attitudes are detectable in the translation into the linguistic (written) medium of what was primarily perceived in another code. The gap realised between perceiving a fact and reproducing it in language is responsible for creating what might correspond to Scholes' (1982) view of fictional context.

A mismatch is always bound to occur not only because of the duplicity of code but also because of the remodelling the narrated event will have to undergo under the direction of the speaker during the process of formulation. The reaction to the other (self) is to be transmitted in the language in forms betraying the degree of proximity or distance achieved. Irony is a possible result in the case of a distance created to convey a non-positive undermining attitude of a certain view of the (possible or real) person subscribing to it.

At the micro level of discourse, that is, at the level of the characters and/or narrator, this kind of irony is frequent. It can be present in what seems to be a mere innocent description or report but is in fact silently directed against a character. The ironist in this case could be a character expressing disapproval of another character or simply trying to be amusing at the latter's expense. The ironist could also be the narrator who, for some reason, decides to colour her account with a touch of irony. In these instances, the irony could be perceived by the narrator, and of course the reader. The same character and one or more others could also be aware of it though not necessarily so. Jane Austen's opening of *Pride and Prejudice* can be cited here as one famous example of this type. While the narrator apparently asserts that "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune is in want of a wife", the question of utterance attribution is made problematic to the reader. Answering the question "Who is saying this?" is the task with which the reader has to come to terms. He has to decide whether the utterance is being used descriptively ("It is a truth ..., I believe") or interpretively ("It is a truth ..., somebody else thinks"). The latter interpretation is of course made more relevant in the context; the ensuing paragraphs reveal that it is the neighbours of the young man who turn out to be the originators of this opinion. The utterance thus is to be reinterpreted not as an assertion from the narrator but as echoing the state of mind of the neighbours, in order to draw attention to their corrupt opportunistic principles and simultaneously set the tone and the cautious and critical attitude to be adopted towards them in the rest of the novel.

Irony can also be directed against the narrators themselves, in which case they may or may not perceive the irony themselves. A narrator could be presented in a way that undermines her actions, utterances and thoughts while a pretence of seriousness and support is apparently adhered to.

First person narrators are particularly exploited in this manner. For they are directly exposed to the reader by the implied author who betrays her presence by portraying her attitude to the narrator. The reader in this case is the only other perceiver of the irony - if communication is to be successful at all. An interesting example of this kind of irony is Ambrose Bierce's *Oil of Dog*, where obvious clashes between the narrator's (or his younger self's) value judgements and the established norms of behaviour bring to the fore the question of attribution:

> My name is Boffer Bings. I was born of honest parents in one of the humbler walks of life, my father being a manufacturer of dog-oil and my mother having a small studio in the shadow of the village church, where she disposed of unwelcome babes ... It had been my custom to throw the babes into the river which nature had thoughtfully provided for the purpose, but that night I did not dare to leave the oilery for fear of the constable. "After all," I said to myself, "it cannot greatly matter if I put it into the cauldron. My father will never know the bones from those of a puppy, and the few deaths which may result from administering another kind of oil for the incomparable *ol.can.* are not important in a population which increases so rapidly".

The assumption that the higher the level of discourse of the participants, the more knowledge they are entrusted with, thus explains why it is easier for these participants to perceive ironies about which others (from lower discourse levels) could be left in the dark. Conversely, the higher the level at which irony occurs, the less participants will be cognisant of it and consequently the more private it becomes. In the final analysis, the communication of irony can be legitimately described in terms of a secret communion taking place at the higher level of discourse, at the author- reader level of communication, above the heads of all other participants.

The second manner in which the cited definition of irony is applicable to literary discourse springs from the very distinguishability of the discourse levels. The potential for disparity in the discourse can be met by a corresponding potential for disparity in values and opinions. The possibility of a clash between values at one level and others at the one below it can result in irony. A character or narrator can become the butt of irony as soon as their standard of values is proved defective. That can be achieved by depicting it in an undermining context elaborated for that purpose by the addresser at the higher level of discourse. Its inappropriateness, falsity or absurdity will be highlighted because of the contrast they offer to the background of appreciated values already established in the work, or presupposed to exist in the mind of the reader. A certain distance automatically obtains. The withdrawal or the absence of support for the participant from their higher level counterpart, leaves their actions and beliefs in a critical position, liable to be tainted with irony. As we have argued, irony is thus capable of expanding the discourse hierarchy. This can be achieved in two ways. Either by adding an extra layer to discourse by leaving the subject of irony at the discourse level in which it is detected and creating another higher one to which the intention of irony is to be attributed. Conversely, when the level of the ironist already exists, another discourse level, a lower one this time, is to be created to accommodate the originator (actual or possible) of the echoed opinion. In both cases, the description of the discourse corresponds to what Sperber and Wilson designate second-degree (more specifically, echoic) utterances, the utterances responsible for the generation of irony.

The existence of this potential for distinction in the levels of discourse allows confusions of attribution to occur. Decisions have to be made at the level of the characters about what is believed by the speaker and what is being merely reported or echoed. Once this is done, it has to be checked against what the narrator and finally the implied author (when they are distinct) think or believe. For the disparity in the discourse levels allows for possibilities of transformation of what is perceived as descriptive at one level, into echoic interpretation at the other. The existence of a higher level from which things can be reported, and 'overheard', gives room for the discreet, implicit expression of unfavourable attitudes. The mismatch in evaluation between the participants at different levels of discourse can be responsible for generating irony at the expense of the lower one.

6.1 Layeredness and dramatic irony

It can argued at this stage that what is known as 'dramatic irony' can also be encompassed by the given definition of irony. In drama, where it is particularly effective because of the presence of a double audience (the addressees within the play and the real theatre audience), the notion of levels of discourse is more tangible.

The reader or the theatre audience becomes aware that irony is at work as soon as a character who, unaware of the fate that awaits him or her (of which the audience is previously informed) starts appreciating a present state, or some expectations about the future which, the audience knows, will eventually conclude in a manner unsatisfactory to that character. The presence of the audience at the privileged higher level of discourse in a situation that equals eavesdropping allows them the knowledge necessary for distinguishing what should be interpreted as an assertion or description, and what is to be seen as echoic intepretation.

What is descriptive for the victim, in the case of dramatic irony, is presented within a context that highlights its absurdity and inappropriateness, usually carefully prepared by the dramatist for that particular effect. The second audience - and sometimes characters in the play itself - are capable, because of the additional knowledge they possess, of perceiving the discrepancy. The utterance for them can only be seen as an echoic interpretation. The irony in this case does not reside in anything the character says but the fact of its being said in a context that undermines it, while drawing attention to a higher level manipulator responsible for the already known outcome. The manipulator, the dramatist, is the participant in the interaction who dissociates herself from the words of the character and draws attention to their absurdity and that of the faith or confidence of their pronouncer. A famous example of the workings of this type of irony is that in Macbeth (I, vi) when Duncan, unaware of the ongoing preparations for his death, comes into what will become the *lieu du crime* and says joyfully,

> This castle hath a pleasant seat: the air
> Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
> Unto our senses
> ...
> Conduct me to mine host: we love him highly,
> And shall continue our graces on him.

7. Summary

It has been argued in this paper that fictional discourse invites an ironic reading in two ways. First, it does so because of the very duplicity of code characteristic of all translation of experience into the linguistic (written) mode that is itself responsible for creating fictional contexts. This duplicity is in turn responsible for generating a duplicity in the addresser, because of the gap it leaves for her to fit her own impressions of the experience into the supposedly neutral report or description. Irony can be a means of expressing the distance and incompatibility filling this gap between the way something could have happened and the way it is expressed.

Second, because of the echoic character of irony, a reader is to back off during the process of interpretation from a speaker once irony is suspected, in search of the addresser higher in the discourse hierarchy to whom the utterance should be atributed. This addresser will be the participant to whom the intention of irony will be attributed, unless there is proof to the contrary. In the latter case, the quest continues still higher in the discourse hierarchy, perhaps not even stopping at the level of the author. For there is nothing to stop a reader, yet another onlooker possibly equipped with more knowledge, to read a given work ironically, turning its words against its very author.

Note

1. Here, and throughout, I use female pronouns to refer to the writer/narrator, and male for the reader.

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